The creation of conjure-bottles:

A study of African-American culture through ritual magic

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Abstract

This paper will explore the creation of the conjure-bottle, a ritual object usedin Afro-American folk magic. Conjure-bottles were bottle-charms used by Afro-American conjurers (sorcerers) in North America and the Caribbean inspiritualpractices during and beyond the slave era. I will attempt to demonstrate two premises;firstly,conjure-bottles employed the widespread West African practice of nkisi (the use of objects to contain spirits)) within their make-up. Secondly, conjure-bottles were influenced by English-derived American witch-bottles to enhance black folk-magic. This will be initiated by dividing the thesis into two approaches. One will analyse nkisi containment charms from African traditional practices to Afro-American folk magic. The second approach will compare the phenomenon of bottle-charms from England to the New World and search for correlations between English witch-bottles and Afro-American conjure-bottles. The inception of conjure-bottles will be examinedwithin the wider context of African-Americanspiritual history. Black spiritualism in the Americas formed from diverse belief-systems which produced syncretic religions and distinct ritual objects. There had been widespread debate whetherAfro-Americans continued to retain elements of African traditions and also, ifconjure-bottle and witch-bottles were related. This author will attempt to prove that both premises were true.

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Introduction

The use of ceramic and glass bottles as containers of spells and charms had been documented in England from the medieval period to the early 20th Century (Merrifield 1955, 1987; Manning 2011, 2012: 94). These magical devices were identified as witch-bottles and literary accounts of their functions were documented in England and colonial America (Becker 1980: 18; Merrifield 1987: 169, 174; Hoggard 2004: 171; Augé 2013: 262). However, archaeological excavations at former slave sites in the United States and the Caribbean unearthedbottle-charm practices by Afro-Americans (Samford 1996, Wilkie 1997; Reeves 2014). These 'conjure-bottles' otherwise known as spirit, spell or Obeah bottles (Manning 2012: 132-3, Reeves 2014: 185; Yronwode 2016) were a unique custom just like the English witch-bottle (Manning 2011, 2012; Reeves 2014: 177) and contained their own ingredients and meanings.Is it possible that Afro-American spiritualists adopted witch-bottle traditions from their colonial neighbours and applied them to their own enchantments?

Conjure-bottles may have been a continuation of Euro-American witch-bottles but positioned within a different set of religious-magical belief-systems. The era of colonial slaveryresulted in the birth of new amalgamated Afro-American faiths based on a variety of internal and external spiritual influences including African and Euro-American folk traditions (Thompson 1983: xiii; Hurbon 1995: 13, 21, 31, 28, 35; Wilkie 1995: 136-7; Anderson 2005: x, 25, 56, 62, 102-3; USI 2011; Leone et al 2014: 212; Advameg Inc 2016). The majority ofWest African slaves followed a tradition called nkisibased on the containment of spirits within objects, which aided them in the physical world (Armitage 2015: 92). The conjure-bottle may have been influenced by this well-known religious practice, since it employed elements of African folk-magic.

Innovative ritual objects were a physical representation of a changed reality for a society. In many global mystical traditions, sympathetic magic employed elements of the victim by the protagonist, which supposedly created a conduit for transferring a spell. This material feature could be an effigy or a personal component of the person (Manning 2012: 8; About.com 2016). It may be possible that conjurers deliberately combined the nkisi with the witch-bottle and produced the conjure-bottle (Wilkie 1997: 88-9; Yronwode 2000; Young 1997, cited in Wilkie 1997: 83)so it could be effective against Euro-Americans and Afro-Americans.

The intention of this paper is to identify two components in the creation of conjure-bottles, witch-bottles and nkisi. However, the social climate ofslavery had a pivotal influence on the inception of spiritual practices and will be discussed within the confines of the subject.Chapter one will present a brief overview of the beginnings of slavery and Afro-American spiritual practices. Chapter two will evaluate the concept

of nkisiin Africa and the New World through two approaches. The first will analyse nkisiobjectsin Africa andthe New World and search for correlations. Secondly, a comparison of two case studies of spiritual containers, onein Ghana (including an examination of a Ghanaian medicine pot held in Manchester Museum) andone in North America. Both objects were present within specialized house-rituals. Chapters three, four and five will examine English, American and Afro-American bottle-charms depositions. It may be possible to identify an unbroken continuation of the tradition from Euro-Americans to Afro-Americans. Chapter six will conclude with a discussion of the results and the reflections of the author.

Chapter 1–Slavery and the beginnings of Afro-American spiritual culture

The Transatlantic slave trade

Between the 15th Century and the late 19th Century, European nations conducted what is known as the 'Transatlantic slave trade.' Dutch merchants introduced sugar to farmers in Barbados who required workers to implement the industry. Thisinstigated the abduction of millions of Africans byEuropeans, with the aid of certainAfrican states, who were sold abroad. Britain and Portugal became the most economically successful nations to prosper from the trade (USI 2011; Angeles 2013: 2; British Library Board 2016; N.A. 2016).Slaves were transported across to the Caribbean, the Americas and parts of Europe for use in mainly agricultural industries, such as tobacco, indigo and rice. However, in the late 18th Century, production turned to cotton as demand in England grew in the textile industries and slavery became re-enforced in the southern North American regions (The Examiner 1860: 499; BBC 2014; Olusoga 2015; Anon 2016a; 2016b). The West African region between Senegal and Angola provided the vast majority of enslaved people. Spiritually, cultural groups such as the Yoruba, Fon, Kongo, Igbo, Mande and Akan and others formed the main core of Afro-American beliefs in the 'Black Atlantic' diaspora (Sambol-Tosco 2004;E2BN 2009; Ogundiran and Saunders 2014: 17).

Fig 1. An early 18th Century map of West Africa (1700-12). "*Carte de la Barbarie le la Nigritie et de la Guinee. By Guillaume De L'Isle. Published by G. de L'Isle, Paris"* (OLDPRINTGALLERY 2012).

West African beliefs

West Africa was known for its numerous polytheistic faiths,yet by the 15th Century, Islam had taken a firm hold over parts of northern Africa and Dutch missionaries accompanyingEuropean tradersconverted groups of natives to Christianity. Consequently, Africans were already aware of the monolithic faiths before the

initiation of colonial slavery (Orser 1994: 35; Apoh&Gavua 2010: 217; Sambol-Tosca 2004; P.R.C. 2016). West African religions shared certain underlying principles including the recognition of an absolute being, who presided over various pantheons of lesser gods. Traditions involved sacrificing and praying to deities and ancestors (Opoku et al 2012; S.A.H.O. 2016). These beliefs were manifested in material objects used in spiritual practices (Shaw 1997; Baum 1999; Parish 1999, 2000; Stahl 2005) connected to ancestor veneration (Rattray 1923), animism (Tylor 1871), divination (Mendosa 1982; Turner 1975; Peek 1991), witchcraft and herbal remedies (Evans-Pritchard 1937, cited in Apoh&Gavua 2010: 217).

There existed six hierarchical levels in African spiritual belief-systems (Opoku 1978). The first was occupied by a supreme being who released power to lesser-powerful gods. The Fon called it 'Mawu-Lisa' and to the Yoruba it was the 'Olurun' but most cultures had their own version. Next in order of importance came the ancestor spirits, and then smaller gods who could infer spiritual aid to the people. The 'Da' was a dominant earth deity, worshipped as a python by the Fon people. The 'Legba' was a trickster and translator entity revered by the Ewe and the Fon and the Yoruba had a similar god called 'Eshu' or 'Elegba'. Placed underneath these figures were animal and plant beings inclusive to specific families and cultures. Next came spirits who aided magicians and witches by empowering them with magical abilities (such as the cannibal-spirit Sasabonsum) and finally, charm-dwelling spirits, who directly assisted magical practitioners (Thompson 1983: 3-5; Hurbon 1995: 14-17; Anderson 2005: 29; Opoku et al 2012). The most relevant supernatural beings were the local spiritual entities (Thompson 1983; Robinson 2010; Advameg Inc 2016). Local deities were more amenable to individual requests for aid than supreme gods.

Fig 2. Two African born slaves, Fassena [left] and Renty [right], owned by Wade Hamilton and B.F. Taylor, South Carolina, 1850 (N.H.C. 2013).

African slaves such as Fassena and Renty (above) had to adapt immediately to their new surroundings and maintaining their customs with other slaves enabled spiritual and social stability. Therefore, ritual practices and cosmological beliefs enacted through dancing and music recreated their worldview. Traditions were maintained throughout this turbulent transition with oral customs, healing arts and other forms of cultural activities. West African belief-systems shared common features, making their ability to adapt with each other more amenable (Thompson 1983: xvi-xv, Ogundiran and Saunders 2014: 21; Advameg Inc 2016; E. B. 2016). However, the passage of time and subsequent generations diluted original beliefs into new syncretic forms. Slaves combined their own ancestral traditions of divination, herbal medicine, evil spirits, protective charms, witchcraft, ghosts and the afterlife with Euro-American folk customs to produce new religious practices. In 1750, one Barbados slave master complained that slaves stubbornly adhered to their paganactivities of rituals, dances, music, plays, burials and marriages despite frequent reprimands (Piersen 2000: 181).

The beginnings of Afro-American spiritual culture

It became evident that Afro-American spiritualism contained African beliefs but evolved into a distinct phenomenon as black culture flowered in the New World. Slaves were taken from different ethno-linguistic groupswith higher degrees of cultural fragmentation, a major factor in the practice of slavery in Africa long before the arrival of Europeans (Wilkie 1995: 136; Angeles 2013: 15-6). Their past affiliations and traditions may have become ineffectual and obsolete, forcing them to create new communities which involved applying old and new spiritual beliefs into unique faiths (Adams 1987; Klingelhofer 1987; Ferguson 1992; Patten 1992; Orser 1994; Santorio 1994; Wilkie 1994b, 1995; Yakubik et al 1994; Yakubik and Mendez 1995; Leone 1995; Handler 1996; Stine et al 1996, cited in Wilkie 1997: 81; Samford 1996: 105; Anderson 2005: 25). Afro-American culture was created from the surrounding social, cultural and spiritual landscape, which made black societies in America radically different from their African forbears.

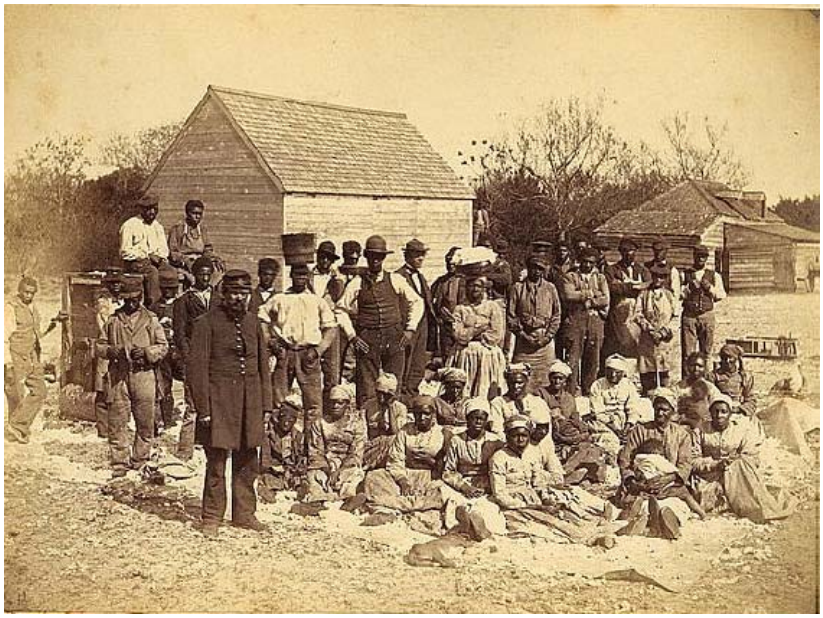


Fig 3. A picture of enslaved Afro-Americans at the Union controlled plantation of Confederate General Thomas Drayton, South Carolina, 1862 (N.H.C. 2013).

Enslaved Afro-American social groups (above) were distinct from Africans with their own cultural sensibilities and belief-systems, which were a combination of social adaptions and spiritual customs from two distinct colonial regions. The Atlantic coastal area consisting of Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland was dominated by the English. The other was the Lower Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico colonised by Spanish and French populations, with the larger French settlement of New Orleans. The infusion of various ethnic groups and the absorption of European and Native American beliefs similar to the African world-view resulted in creolized ritual customs practiced by blacks and whites (Wilkie 1995: 137; Anderson 2005:26). The northern West African cultures of the Ewe, Fon, Yoruba and Mande speakers were located in the Lower Mississippi with later arrivals from the central West African Kongo Kingdom. Over time, Haitian migrants settled in Louisiana and Afro-Cubans ventured into Florida (Botkin 1945; Tallant 1946; Saxon et al 1989; Clayton 1990; Hurston 1990, cited in Wilkie 1995: 136). Magical-spiritual practices were dominated by the original slave groups (Yoruba, Kongo, Fon, Ewe and Mande) but contaminated by later arrivals (Wilkie 2000: 14; Anderson 2005: 25-6).

Fig 4. A contemporary map of the Caribbean by Jean Baptiste d' Anville in 1788 (Diaz 2016).

Spiritual beliefs were dominated by three main religious traditions, voodoo, hoodoo and conjure. Voodoo was one of the major forces in Afro-American spiritualismand just like conjure and hoodoo, its origins lay in West African cultures including the Yoruba, Dahomean and the Bakonga-dominated Kongo (Thompson 1993: xvi, cited in Armitage 2015: 90). Unfortunately, there was much confusion in the understanding of these three facets of black spiritualism. Voodoo was a syncretic faith founded on African beliefs and adaptions in the Deep South with its own deities, priests and rituals. It was sometimes linked to the West African faith of Vodun or Vodu or the Haitian religion of Voudou but essentially referred to the southern North American belief-system located near the Mississippi River and New Orleans (Ferguson 1992; Wilkie 1995; Stine et al 1996, cited in Wilkie 1997: 83; Anderson 2008: x; Robinson 2010). Hoodoo was a collection of magical customs founded on divination, creating charms and producing spells. It may also have shared a common lineage with voodoo as it appeared to originate from the Mississippi region. Hoodoo formed from an amalgamation of African, Native American and European mystical customs but it was the version known on the plantations, a practice employed to control or heal people through incantations, charms and potions (Botkin 1945; Clayton 1990; Hurston 1990, cited in Wilkie 1995: 141; Anderson 2005: 25). Conjure referred to an assortment of magical practices and beliefs based on apotropaic and spell-making charms and amulets but present in the wider areas of North America. However, its name betrayed its European influences. Conjure derived from the English term 'conjuration' for calling forth spirits, as well as cunning, rootwork and tricking, which all had European origins but were adopted by Afro-American spiritualists (Wilkie 1997: 84; Fennell 2000: 298; Brown 2001: 103; Anderson 2008: xi, 2).

In New Orleans, blacks understood magical customs as hoodoo, while, whites termed them as voodoo. Male magicians were named aswangateurs and female ones,wangatueses. In Florida, the Cuban faiths of Santería and Palo Mayombe(merged with Catholicism) became the forebears of a distinct voodoo-type practice called Nańgino, with practitioners called papa-lois and mama-lois (Wilkie

1997: 94; Anderson 2005: 27). In the English-influenced Atlantic coastal regions, black wizards were referred to as conjurers, double-heads and rootworkers and their activities labelled as tricking, rooting, goophering and conjuring, and mojo was deemed to signify beneficial magic in Mississippi (Puckett 1968: 201; Campbell 1946; Laguerre 1978, cited in Wilkie 1997: 84; Anderson 2005: 27-8). The word 'goopher' may have had links to the Kongo word 'Kufwa' meaning "to die." Another well-known term, 'mojo' or 'joe moe' inferred positive magic and may be related to 'Mooyo' from the Kongo Kingdom, which stemmed from spirits that occupied charms (Anderson 2005: 28).

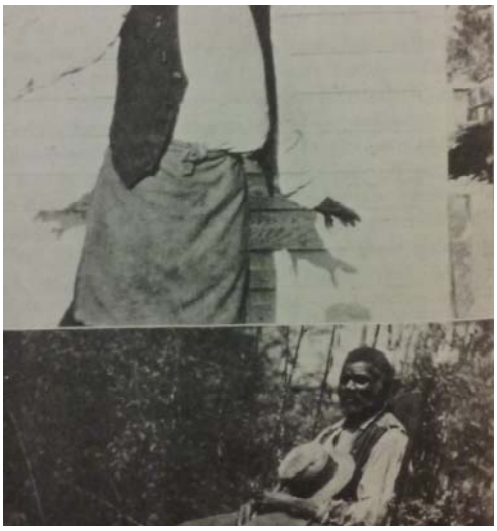


Fig 1.7 Voodoo in Mississippi

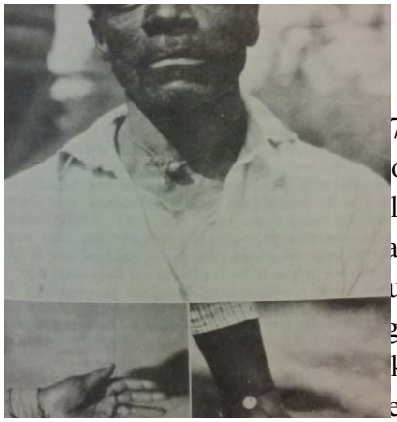
Voodoo may be inferred from the Ewe and Fon word 'Vodu', meaning god or fear or worship of the gods. Louisiana became the home of voodoo, an amalgamation of Vodu and Catholicism (Herskovits 1941; Simpson 1978, cited in Wilkie 1995: 141). While, hoodoo may be a variation of voodoo, it has also been suggested as another term for 'juju' (meaning charm or magic in West Africa). In Louisiana many magical expressions correlated with African terms (Puckett 1968: 201), including beneficial charms) may have originated from the Mande-speaking Bambara group. 'Gris-gris' (a description of charms and spells) also came from the Mande-speaking Mandingo tribe, who used paraphernalia such as 'gregory bags' to curse victims, which could be pacified by throwing a coin over the shoulder. Additionally, 'wanga', as in wangateuer may have had Mande origins (Saxon et al 1945: 366; Anderson 2005: 28). The common fear of slaves was to be 'fixed', a magical punishment if one violated a social boundary. In one case, a woman paid $100 to a conjurer to bewitch a spurned lover (Nassau 1969; Marwick 1970; Hurston 1990: 240-3, cited in Wilkie 1995: 137). The use of spiritual actions to maintain social boundaries reflected African cultural norms and appeared to have been retained within Afro-American society.

Cross-cultural spiritual material manifestations

Studies have shown that material charms from colonial sites exhibited multi-ethnic influences and were adopted by different social groups. Numerous oral and

ethnographic accounts described the use of charms and amulets worn by slaves on the body,such as metal coins. Perforated coins hung around the neck or ankles on a string were popular in the art of deflecting evil. Pierced silver coins had been discovered at former slave sites in Louisiana, Virginia, Arkansas and Georgia (Southern Workman 1895b: 225; Rose 1985; Adams 1987; Patten 1992; Wilkie 1995; Yakubik and Mendez 1995, cited in Wilkie 1997: 89). Apotropaic coin-charms were an English tradition transmitted to the Americas by English colonists, along withwitch-bottles and other amulets (Horn 1994: 413–415; King 1996:28–29; Becker 2005; McKitrick 2009; Rivers Cofield 2010, cited in Lucas 2014: 107).

Fig 6. Coins with punctured holes were probably worn as amulets. Hoodoo activists believed objects could manipulate spiritual forces, such as these coins from St. Simons Island, GA (E.B.C. 2004).



7. Amulets were the physical onse to combating conjuration lness. A leather strap worn on ankle, wrist or waist would ue strength or prevent whooping gh. A silver coin could deflect k magic or bring luck and a e-paw worn around the neck would also bring good luck (Puckett 1968: 315-4).

Material evidence for these syncretic activities could be found at sites like Charles Town in Maryland, Chesapeake. Beads, mirrors, quartz crystals, bent and pierced coins were used in Native American, Islamic, Afro-American and Euro-American folk traditions. Social interactions between these diverse groups resulted in adoption of cross-cultural material objects for spiritual purposes (Patten 1992: 8; Ascher & Fairbanks 1971: 8; Adams 1987: 204, cited in Orser 1994: 40, 41; Lucas 2014: 106).

Fig 8. Artefacts from Chesapeake comprised of cowrie shells, pierced coins and pendants (Fig 3. Lucas 2014: 112). The discovery of these objects within ethnically blurred areas of Native Americans, black slaves and Europeans have been construed as the beginnings of creolization (ibid 113).

It had been presumed by certain scholars that assemblages of beads, pierced coins, shells and polished stones were remnants of Afro-American habitation (Russell 1997: 63–70; Wilkie 1997: 82–92; Morgan 1998: 621, cited in Fennell 2000: 283). However, 17th Century Anglo- folk traditions employed the use of polished stones and coins to ward off witchcraft (Bonser 1963: 342-3; Merrifield 1988: 90-2, 161-2, cited in Fennell 2000: 286-7). Shells and beads used in apotropaic practices had been found in English andAfrican-American spiritualism (Bonser 1963: 234, cited in Fennell 2000: 287; Handler 2009: 5). Historical archaeologists neglected the study of Euro-American practices and ignored the complex interaction of white and black beliefs in the creation of unique syncretic folk traditions (Manning 2014: 3) including conjure and hoodoo. The ethnographic and archaeological evidence for cross-cultural exchange between blacks and non-blacks in relation to folk customs was overwhelming.Davidson, (2010: 642) in his study of ritual shoes in Afro-American burial rites recounted that the boundaries between 19th Century cultures were permeable and ideas and practices were adopted from many avenues (Manning 2014: 3). The material existence of slaves, freed slaves and poor whites was very similar (Otto 1984: 121, cited in Kingelhoffer 1987: 113) and social exchanges in those circumstances would have been natural.

The belief of amulets to defend individuals from ill-health was common in Africa as well and transmitted across the Atlantic by slaves. Illness and misfortune were caused by evil spirits and incantations could repel such attacks (Piersen 2000: 181). Similar Christian and Euro- American beliefs were evident in Afro-American charms and amulets(Wilkie 1997: 96; Anderson 2005: 60-1). The horseshoe placed on a dwelling threshold deflected the entry of a witch, according to black slaves in the 19th Century. This same custom was stated in the 1584 English book 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft' by Reginald Scottand alsoused in Scotland. Another protective charm was a rabbit's foot, which was applied by slaves but also originated in Europe (Campbell 1902: 12; Saxon et al 1945: 382; Fennell 2000: 297; Anderson 2005: 60-1). There were also signs of syncretic magical acts in conjuring, in one case, a child

was poisoned with a concoction of scorpion and toad heads with nine pins, hair and pins in a cake (Southern Workman 1895a: 143). In many conjuring cases, bags, bundles and bottles were used in similar overlapping charm-making activities. Poisonous balls filled with herbal materials were buried beneath paths. Bottles or balls filled with reptile parts, poison or needles were buried within chimneys or room corners to either protect or inflict magical spells (Southern Workman 1895a: 144-5; Thurston 1931: 329).

Although, slaves converted to Christianity and its teachings of a supreme god and devil, the underlying spirits were still African in conception (Orser 1994: 36; Piersen 2000 182; Sambol-Tosca 2004).

Fig 9. This cross and bead necklace artefact was discovered in a conjure-house at the Levi Jordan Plantation. It was believed that Afro-Americans amalgamated Christian and African beliefs to create syncretic faiths (E.B.C. 2004).

Fig 10. This brass fist from the Poplar Forest Plantation in Virginia was believed to descend from Latin American amulets representing the hand of god and West African beliefs. African metal charms called ‘ofrenda’ protected one from evil (E.B.C. 2004).

In the 18th Century, Christianized slaves amalgamateddifferent beliefs and symbolic objects such as crosses were decorated with African charms and Jesus Christ was projected as anAfrican-type faith-healer(Orser 1994: 39; Sambol-Tosco 2004; Anderson 2008: 114). The survival of African beliefs imbedded within a strong Christian background, depended on the similarities between European and African folk traditions. These similarities allied white and black fears against witchcraft and both races consulted black spiritualists who remained active throughout the colonial period aiding clients to resist witches, ghosts and evil sorcerers (Piersen 2000: 186).

During the antebellum period, contacttypically consistedof house slaves engaged in domestic service to their masters and their families (Anderson 2005: 62). Surveys at slave sites in Maryland and Tidewater displayed West African customs entwined with white culture forming social constructs different from both (Kulikoff 1978: 255, cited in Klingelhoffer 1987: 117). However, whites were equally curious of black traditions and mysticism. Newbell Niles Puckett was a white practitioner of conjure in the 1920s, who studied the arts of Afro-American magical customs. Dr. Buzzard and Dr. Harris were two other well-known white conjurers popular with black populations. By the end of the 19th Century, European magical rituals transformed conjure and hoodoo and blackspiritualism could no longer be recognised as a strictly African-derived practice (Puckett 1968: vii; Anderson 2005: 62).

Chapter 2 – The concept ofNkisi (plural minkisi) in African pots and Afro-American conjure-bottles

This chapter will compare theperception of nkisifrom two approaches, firstly, a comparable examination of West Africa and Afro-American nkisi containers. It will also includea primary analysis of a Ghanaian medicine pot held at the Manchester Museum. The second approach will compare twospiritual containers from house-shrines in Africa and North America. A ceramic pot found in a shrine in Ghana and a glass conjure-bottle unearthed at a sacred slave site in North America will be inspected to study the application of shrine deposits in both environments.

Nkisi in West Africa

The dominant form of spiritual beliefin West Africa was and still is nkisi(plural minkisi) as practiced in Ghana andthe Kongo (Bakongo culture). To avoid confusion, only the term nkisi will be used in this chapter.To the Bakongo, the god Ne Kongo presented the first nkisi to the people, an earthenware pot containing sacred medicine offering divine protection (Orser 1994: 39; Harris 2016). Nkisiwere benevolent spirits who inhabited charms and protected owners from harm (Anderson 2005: 38). Theyalso referred to the containment of spirits in various forms (Armitage 2015: 92), such aspots and shrines, as in the Tallensi culture in Ghana (Dawson 2009: vii, cited in Insoll 2011a: 146; Insoll 2015: 250, 253). West African and Kongo peoples were the first to be taken to North America and it is estimated that the majority of Afro-Americans could trace their cultural heritage to those regions (Thompson 1983; Anon 2016d). The application of nkisi in Africa focussed primarily on ancestor relations and healing through charms and medicines but nkisi in the New World became redefined to encapsulate apotropaic practices related toamulets and physical protection.

The Bakongo medicinal and healing rites manifested materially as either a pot, snail shell, bag or gourd containing charcoal, plants, soil, stones, chalk and nuts representing the medicines required to imbue power to the nkisi (Samford 1996: 107). Kindoki or projecting evil was a predominant fear with Bakongo people, who

assigned illnesses and physical injuries and death to theKindoki (Van Wing 1941: 92-4, cited in Armitage 2015: 90). Africans had no concept of good and evil and these rituals could be dispensedfor negative or positive roles (Bockie 1993: 41-3, cited in Armitage 2015: 90).

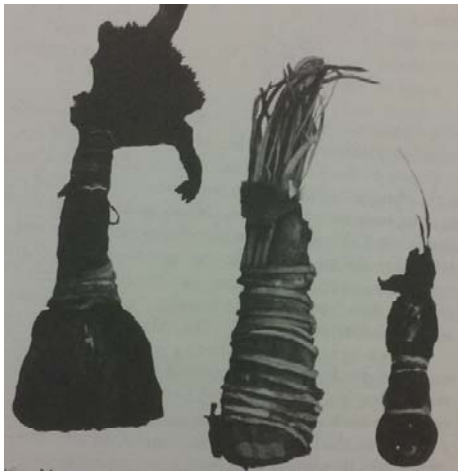


Fig 11. Nkisi containers from the Kongo called pacquet-kongo (plate 76, Thompson 1983: 127).

Scholars (Macgaffey1988: 191) described nkisi as initial containers stabilised (kumwa) when imbued with the symbolic manifestation of a spirit (Armitage 2015: 92). According to Macgaffey (1988: 190, 1990: 49), nkisi could be linked to African spirits, embodiments of beings from the afterlife. These spiritual beings could be local spirits (bisimbubankita), ancestors (bakuiu) or ghosts (minkuyu). Min'kuyu were evil ghosts of former witches, who had been refused entry to the ancestral after-life (Anderson 2005: 30). The nkisi could be a manufactured object containing a spirit and its power engaged by a person for specific purposes but also referred to a segment separated from the whole. This implied that any piece of annkisi enclosed spiritual power (Van Wing 1941: 86, cited in Armitage 2015: 92).

To the Bakongo, the predominant aim was to heal ailments from sorcery (Macgaffey and Janzen 1974: 87, cited in Armitage 2015: 90). Ritual was an aspect of social control and inherent within the social fabric of society and complicit in dispensing justice to those who would disrupt the social harmony (Armitage 2015: 90-1).

Nkisi in the New World

Bakongo beliefs were a major contributor to the Dahomean religion in Haiti and manifested in the form of nkisi. A spiritual force infused the object so the practitioner could control and use it for specific purposes (Sherlock 2012). The creation of the nkisi varied immensely from culture to culture and there was no defined arrangement to its role, purpose and shape. The medicinal elements instilled were also diverse depending on their cultural origins and intentions (Anderson 2005: 38; Macgaffey 1977, cited in Armitage 2015: 92). The imbued medicinal components, which instilled healing energy, had to conform to defined specifications, or else the healing properties would weaken (Armitage 2015: 92). West African 'gbo' charm-bags mirrored Afro-American gregory bags, as both were designed to fulfil

personal desires. Another parallel was the use of graveyard earth within West African nkisi and American goopher charms. However, African earth invoked ancestral support, while slave dust was predominantly used for black magic (Anderson 2005: 38-9).

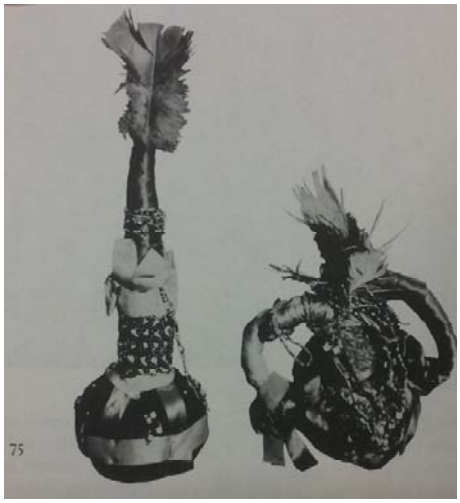


Fig 12. This Haitian nkisi, Simba Macaya (left, plate 75) highlighted design variations from the Kongo pacquet-kongo (fig 11). Both nkisi played a role in similar spiritual purposes as mediating points between the living and the dead (Thompson 1983: 126).

Nkisi was popularly known as a power object and its physical application in numerous forms including figurines made it difficult to interpret (Macgaffey 1988: 188, Bickford Berzock 2003: 14, cited in Armitage 2015: 92). In Africa, a connection was created between the client and the nkisi, which was some type of personal item placed into a bag (mfunya). The bag could contain feathers from a stolen chicken or related to a crime, reminding the nkisi of the subject (Macgaffey 1990: 52, cited in Armitage 2015: 95). Kongo nkisi traditions were observable in Afro-American love-charm practices. A black New Orleans resident, Robert Bryant described one form of love-charm using a red flannel and nine needles. Each time the cloth was folded; three needles were insertedand an incantation uttered until the procedure was completed (Thompson 1983: 129). A 19th Century Missouri account revealed the use of a luck ball containing four lengths of white yarn, which were knotted with four knots at four stages (ibid 130). Evidence has shown that nkisi was a diverse tradition utilizing diverse forms of containment including pots and bags, which enclosed various combinations of magical ingredients for different functions.

The uses of nkisi as ‘containment’ bags was recognised within Afro-American magical practices (Samford 1996; Wilkie 1997; Brown 2001). Red flannel bags used to ward off evil or to infer misfortune were derived from Kongo practices and were still common in Louisiana (Thompson 1983: 129-31; Fontenot 1994, cited in Wilkie 1997: 89; Anderson 2005: 27). African nkisi regularly took the shape of packets like ‘gbo’ but in Afro-American practices these were possibly manifested in mojo bags or other similar charms. Another common ingredient in nkisi was roots. Kongo sorcerers spat out roots such as disisa or nsanga-lavu in incantations, whereas, Afro-American conjurers or root-doctors spat out the popular European root: John the

Conqueror in a similar fashion (Hurston 1931: 347; Thompson 1983: 131; Anderson 2005: 38-9).

Fig 13. The woman in the centre is wearing a mojo bag around her neck as a form of apotropaic protection (Puckett 1968: 385).

Mojo or Joe Moe were Kongo-derived terms meaning magical amulets used for white magic, and may have also originated from the African Mooyo, representing spirit-habiting magical charms (Anderson 2005: 28). Conjurers practiced magic through either: charms, powders or washes with their own particular spirit. Containers in white magic were termed tobies, jacks, mojos or luck balls but in black magic, they were tricks, conjure bags or wanga bags (ibid 100). These containers held specific items such as silver luck-balls to initiate spells and charms. Incidentally, Scottish and English charms also consisted of balls of hair (Ronag) and mountain ash-powder (Campbell 1902: 11; Anderson 2005: 89).

Nkisi customs were also transmitted from the Caribbean Islands. It was common to acclimatise African slaves in the West Indies before sending them to the American mainland (Thompson 1983: 129). The parallels between West Indies Obeah sorcerers and North American conjurers showed widespread contact. Glass bottles containing scorpions, spiders and sarsparilla appeared in both geographic locations. Also, canes emboldened with frogs and serpents were significant adornments to both types of sorcerers (Morgan 2000: 172). Numerous magical containment-charms had been discovered at slave sites, three glass, ceramic and wooden polygonal objects were unearthed in Maryland (ibid 172) and were attributed to conjuring. One conjure-bottle filled with poison was discovered by a conjure-doctor under a door sill. Each instance the owner stepped across the bottle a drop of poison would mystically enter their body until the bottle was depleted (Southern Workman 1895b: 225). The adoption of bottle-charms and bags may have spread from the Caribbean to the New World. The features in conjure-bottles appeared to simulate witch-bottle and nkisi characteristics.

The concept of nkisi in Africa worked in tandem with specific spirits (usually ancestor). However, there was little evidence of original African belief-systems active in the Americas. Afro-American spiritual practices contrived to inflict suffering or alleviate ailments caused by witchcraft. Obeah wizards were fluent in cures made from herbs with 'magical' properties, in reality hallucinogeniccompounds (Breslaw 2000: 100). American ethnohistorical accounts described such practices in reconfigured forms. Here, containers functioned as charms or healing devices and in many cases; bottles were incorporated into the spell. Conjure usually implied being hexed and there were numerous remedies. Ingredients ranged from pepper, salt, coins, needles, pins, roots and snake heads, enclosed within balls, bags and bottles for either black or white magic. One bottle filled with poison was buried under a path to ensnare a victim and another, containing nine nails and pins and a fluid was believed to be a popular charm? A bottle with a snake and insects enclosed was discovered buried in a yard and another bottle containing roots, red powder and stones was found under a doorway (Puckett 1968: 230-1). In Alabama, a snuff-bottle filled with fluids and vinegar and a bag containing red ants and white sand were both used for conjuring (ibid 231), inferring that both forms were for similar roles. The infliction of physical sorcery was not confined to the black community. Black conjurers were regularly accused and executed for attempting to poison their white owners with poisonous spells and concoctions. In 18th Century Virginia, over 175 cases were recorded with harsh punishments dispensed out (Morgan 2000: 170).

The diffusion of nkisi from Africa to the New World altered its appearance, form and meaning. Fundamental principles of diverse containers filled with medicinal nourishment for spiritual aid remained the same but meanings altered through adaption to the new radical environment of slavery. Community cohesion was crucial under those harsh social conditions. The similarity of contents and functions of charm-bags and bottle-charms inferred a causal link.

Annkisi medicine pot at the Manchester Museum

A number of 'medicine' pots from Ghana were held at the Manchester Museum in the Bryn James collection (170813/1: section 0.9866/7-16). Bryn James collaborated with Professor Tim Insoll in the study of Tallensi ritual practices. This author was allowed access by JamiliaHawa, the collections officer on the 17th February 2016, to make a close inspection. One item, a black unglazed coarse stoneware medicine pot (fig 14) was decorated with intriguing designs and believed to be used in nkisi practices. African medicine and magical potions were indistinguishable within ritualization. The decorations could be linked to Adinkra symbolism, a system of human values such as tolerance, integrity, family and harmony (uk.pinterest.com 2016).Each particular design may have represented specific meanings aligned with the contents and intentions of the ritual. The shapes also paralleled Kongo pottery styles which used concentric bands moving horizontally,infused with dots, chevrons and zig-zags (Wilkie 2000: 19).

Tallensi religion in Ghana consisted of numerous beliefs, such as ancestral and earth cults with totemic and healing facets. Shrines were a major aspect of the religion and comprised of an earthen pillar structure containing personal belongings such as bracelets, hoes, knives connected to a specific ancestor. Other objects such as skulls and jawbones were also placed within the shrines. However, primary deposits within these religious sites consisted of sacred stones and ritual pots (Insoll, Kankpeyeng, and MacLean 2016).

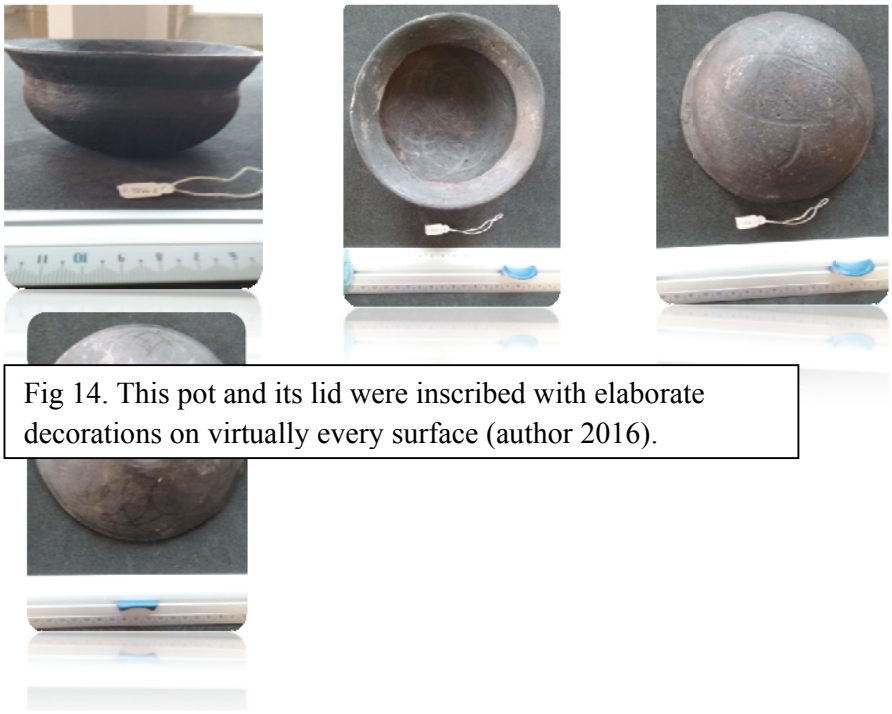


Fig 14. This pot and its lid were inscribed with elaborate decorations on virtually every surface (author 2016).

A recent study of Ghanaian 'medicine' pots of the Tallensi from the Tong Hills in northern Ghana (Fraser et al 2012) showed ceramic vessels were used to create and collect ritual 'medicines' (Insoll 2011a). A hoard of discarded pots believed to be former medicine containers were discovered in the Touwang region (Insoll et al 2008).

There was no distinction between medicine and magic, both worked in unison to counter-act witchcraft as maladies were products of malevolent spells. The Tallensi oral history did not appear to predate the mid-17th Century (Fraser et al 2012: 2506). However, religious beliefs could extend far longer than social structures (Insoll 2008: 381). An analysis of pot remains (Van Dongen et al 2011) ranged from minerals, animal, plants and various other forms (Insoll 2011b, cited in Fraser et al 2012: 2506). Clay-based (mineral) medicines were produced by combining water and clay taken from specific shrines. Around 33 different plant ingredients were revealed with either single or five plant combinations. Plant leaves, bark, juice or stem parts were ground down to powder and applied externally or internally. Animal bones (rabbit or bird) were also grinded into powder and commonly inhaled or inserted into body

incisions (Insoll 2011b, cited in Fraser et al 2012: 2507). The use of powders, herbs and sacred-derived clay emulated contents and graveyard dust from nkisi and conjure practices.

The Tallensi ritual-pot in the shrine of destiny

A ritual pot excavated inside a household destiny-shrine in Ghana constituted a particular worldview combined with physical objects and mnemonic belief-systems. The principle of destiny was pivotal to a Tallensi male family-head and was manifested in a physical structure or Yin (good destiny) shrine. These shrines were conduits to specific ancestors enacted through a series of ritual activities (Fortes 1983: 19, cited in Insoll 2008: 383). However, the material expressions were closely tied to economic, political and historical conditions (Insoll 2008: 384). Archaeological excavations at a former abode in the Tonga Hills in Northern Ghana revealed a number of shrines within one household.

Abandoned family habitats were rare and indicated the end of a family heritage(ibid 387)and the presence of ceramic pots reflected female participation in rituals (Smith 1989, cited in Insoll 2008: 388). The Tallensi compound in the Tonga Hills contained the usual features such as kitchens, bathrooms, ancestor room, butthe personal or Yin shrine seemed to be the most durable section of the property (Insoll 2008: 389).

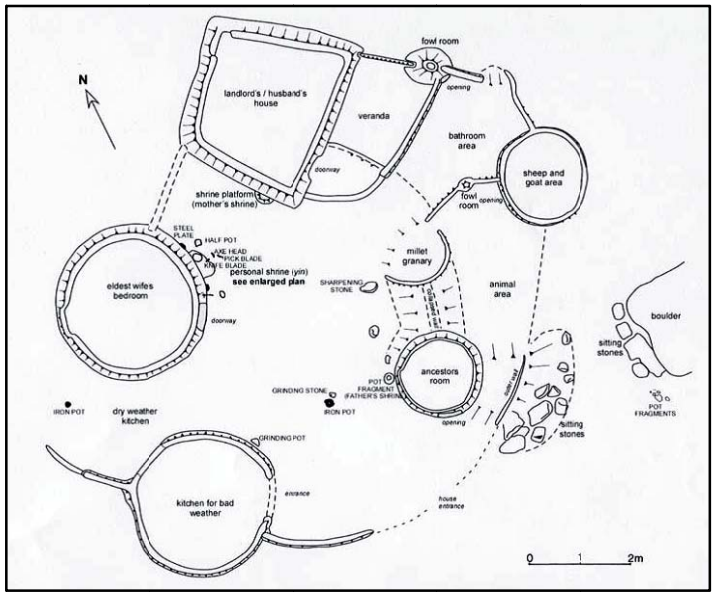


Fig 15. Layout of abandoned compound at Tengzug, Tong Hills containing the father shrine (fig 2. ibid 390).

Fig 16. This shrine pot with its contents was intrinsically connected with the personal lives of its owner(s) (Fig 3. ibid 391).

Theclay pot was globular in shape and constructed from unglazed earthenware, which appeared to be deliberately infused within the structure of the building. The pot contents consisted of cowrie shells, a razor, bracelets, a copper bell, a pebble and coins (ibid 389-90). A number of shrine pots were discovered within the same structure with some containing objects such as bronze bracelets and ceramic fragments (ibid 391). Shrines were believed to be physical containers of spirits and ancestors who had to be appeased in order to attain blessings (Apoh&Gavua 2010). This action invoked social and spiritual harmony with community members (Dawson 2009: vii; Apoh&Gavua 2010: 212). The design of the shrine-pot and its contents embedded within a building fabric correlated with witch-bottle traditions and as previously mentioned, European and African practices with similar configurations could be amalgamated.

The Tallensi cosmology was heavily based on ancestralveneration; ancestors were viewed as mediators to the gods. They were contacted through shrine offerings and sacrifices (Insoll 2008: 382-3). Material objects influenced the history and personal status of individuals as personhood was not intangible but became represented and altered through physical things (Ferme 2001: 4, 18; Ogundiran 2002: 431, cited in Insoll 2008: 387). Household shrines were mediums for the placement of objects directly related to an individual request for spiritual aid. Fortes (1983: 20) revealed a male who had recovered from sickness was told through divination to refrain from farming and subsequently offered his hoe to the shrine. In another case, the crocodile skull and the arrow used to destroy the animal were infused within a shrine to acknowledge the hunting prowess of the hunter and to forge a link with his ancestor (Insoll 2008: 386).Nkisi contents represented aspects of human biographies approved by ancestors or spirits.

<u>The Frogmore Manor Plantation conjure-bottle</u>

Archaeological excavations at Frogmore Manor plantation in St. Helena Island, South Carolina, took place in 1988 and concentrated exclusively at the slave quarters (Brown 2001: 107). A number of possible ritual objects were discovered in one slave cabin, placed within a pre-supposed deposition pattern and included a conjure-bottle.

It had been surmised these assemblages constituted a 'curing kit' akin to annkisi, which had been found within West African and Kongo regions. This was one of a handful of spiritual tool-kitsof this particular nkisi practiceunearthed in North American slave sites (Klingelhofer 1987; Patten 1992, cited in Orser 1994: 42; Brown 2001: 102). The occupant was identified in accounts as a midwife, which indicated a spiritual healer or conjurer (Brown 2001: 107). Excavations were focussed on four underground deposits located near the centre of each of the four walls. These four findings appeared to correspond to the four points of a West African cosmogram (ibid 107). The Kongo cosmogram signified the cycle of life and the cosmos and like the Tallensi shrine it was also a crossroads between the dead and the living (McDavid 1998).

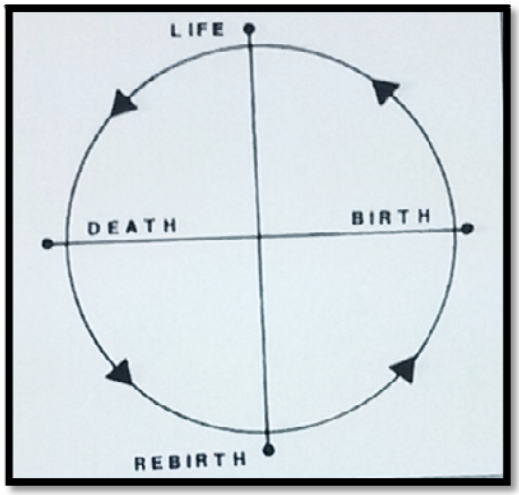


Fig 17. A depiction of a Kongo cosmogram (tendwa nzá Kongo) reflecting the cycle of life (Fig III. Samford 1996: 105).

One deposit was a storage pit and the other, contained the remains of pieces of metal, shell and ash, while, the other two deposits were identified as burials of whole animals. One of the animals was a chicken with its wings apparently facing outwards and above the chicken was placed a broken green glass bottle. The other animal burial was a near complete cow, also with its head and legs facing outwards. There was also, a bottle base and a complete wine bottle lying above the animal in an inverted position and accompanied by a segment of a colonoware ceramic (Brown 2001: 107-8). The context of the bottle suggested it was a conjure-bottle and the other bottles may have been damaged by accident. Only the bottles were deposited with animal sacrifices, which may have indicated the bottle-charms were strengthened through spiritual sacrifices.

Fig 18. The 'conjure' bottle discovered at Frogmore Manor Plantation, St. Helena Island. It was believed that

The conjure-bottle contained a large amount of "magnetic sand," a small copper bead, and a number of small shell and bone fragments. It was discovered at the eastern side of the house just like a conjure kit recovered at the Jordan Plantation (Kenneth L. Brown pers. com). The contents were African in nature, shells, beads and powder charms were aspects of nkisi medicines used for invigorating the spirits inhabiting the container. However, the use of gold magnetic sand in love charms was practiced in the Deep South (Thurston 1931: 351), so nkisi meanings may have altered.Each ingredient may have represented a request placed within the bottle and placated with the animal sacrifices. Brown (2001: 108-9) suggested rituals were concealed due to spiritual suppression, for example, ritual house deposits in Maryland containing beads, pins, pierced coins and discs and crystals were believed to be conjuring kits for divination and controlling spirits (Leone & Fry 1999: 372) and carefully concealed to outsiders.Many caches containing hair, roots, bones and clothingwere common across slave sites and were used to control spirits in conjuring practices (ibid 375). Also, the use of European material culture could be attributed to availability. Black spiritualists could have employed ceramic containers or textile bags in their ceremonies but chose glass bottles perhaps because they represented a European form of spiritual containment, which increased their effectiveness.

The Frogmore Manor Plantation and numerous ritual deposits highlighted configurations based on symbolic designs, such as cosmograms, conjurers and other related objects (Leone & Fry 1999: 374; Brown 2001: 109). Euro-American material culture was infused with Afro-American beliefs and principles, thereby altering their meanings and cultural settings (Brown 2001: 109). The combination of all these components proposed that the conjurer/midwife transformed the cabin space for ritualistic purposes, possibly for healing, conjuring and conducting births (ibid 103). This ’conjure-bottle was an exceptional find as it was based within a recognisable

West African nkisi ritual indicating perhaps a transitional phase between African and Afro-American folk practices.

The two examples from Ghana and Frogmore Manor representedTallensi and Bakongonkisi practices. They were included because, only Bakongo-derived Afro-American house 'shrines' had been discovered and studied in detail, along with Ghanaian house-shrines. Both cultures applied nkisi concepts on human life-cycles related to ancestor veneration and spiritual contact using sacred spaces. However, this study comparedthe use of nkisi from West African and Afro-American perspectives. The Tallensishrine-pot and Frogmore manor conjure-bottle both enclosed similar 'medicinal' substances in containers, which were partial elements of a whole ritual practice. There placement within sacred household locations imitated a shared conceptbut for different meanings. In Africa, nkisicontained medicinal elements to aid relations between humans and spiritsthrough offerings and in healing. In the enslaved environment of the Americas, coveted nkisirituals encompassed a combination of traditional African beliefs with syncretic Afro-American customs but for more diversified roles.

Chapter 3–The English witch-bottle

This chapter will begin with an introduction of the original witch-bottle phenomenon and examine its explanation in the academic record as a point of comparison. It will also include three examples of witch-bottle discoveries from Reigate, Hellington and York and ascertain their functions and meanings from an archaeological and ethnographic perspective.

Fig 19. The Holywell witch-bottle. This 17th Century bellarmine stoneware jar contained 60 bent pins and was exhibited at the London Museum (Manning 2011).

In England, between the 16th and 20th Centuries, a number of stoneware and glass bottles were discovered concealed within buildings, beneath thresholds, hearths, floors and wall spaces and in open areas. There were around 200 jugs, jars, vials and bottles containing arrangements of urine, bent nails, pins, human nail and hair remains, cloth and other assorted items and believed to function asanti-witchcraft devices. English settlers transported this custom to America, where a handful of

examples had been discovered (Becker 2005; Hoggard 2004: 170; Manning 2011, 2012: 93).

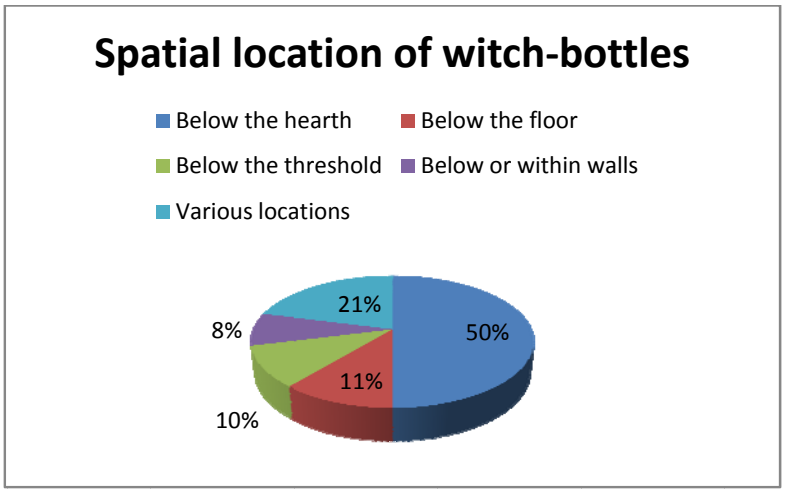


Table 1. In this survey (Hoggard 2004: 170-4), half of the bottle-charms were discovered beneath hearths and other areas (Table: author).

The earliest forms of witch-bottles were constructed from stoneware and identified as 'bellarmines' because of theexteriordecorated bearded images. They were buried underneath fireplaces, thresholds and floors and within wall spaces(Merrifield 1987: 173, Hoggard 2004: 170-4, Manning 2011).

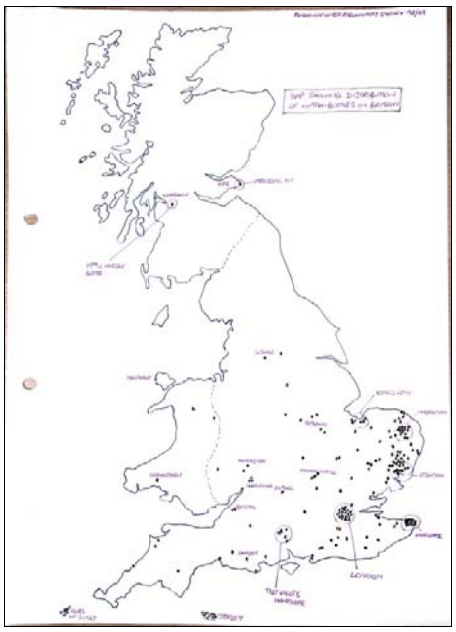


Fig 20. This 1998/98 map of witch-bottle finds in England (Hoggard pers. com 2014) showed that they were prominent in South-eastern and coastal areas and may have been influenced from the continent (Merrifield 1954: 12, 1969: 100-1, cited in Manning 2012: 97).

Witch-bottles wereused to counter-act harmful spells or to protect buildings from malice through the concept of sympathetic and apotropaic magic (Merrifield 1955: 195; 1987: 163; Hoggard 2004: 170; Manning 2011). The original usage was to alleviate urinary pain caused by witchcraft. Primary ingredients were urine, nails and nail clipping or human hair. Nails would travel along the urine and reverse the pain back onto the witch (Kittredge 1956:103; Thomas 1971:543-544; Merrifield 1987, cited in Manning 2012: 95).

Later magical ingredients instilled more complexitywith combinations of wood, bark, thorns, grass, heart-shaped cloths with pins and small animal bones (Hoggard 2004: 172). However, urine and sharp metal items were the principal elements.

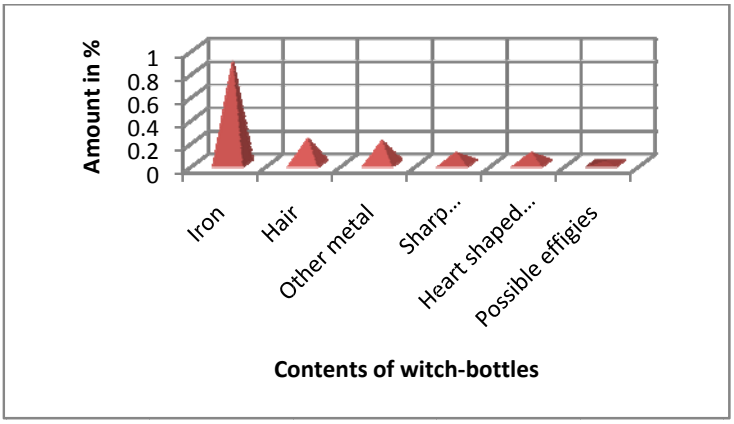


Table 2. Iron (Hoggard 2004: 172) was by far the most common ingredient (Table: author).

Late 17th Century literary accounts were the earliest known references to the witch-bottle practice. In the 'Miscellanies' by John Aubrey, published in 1691, an account described the bewitchment of a horse and the actions taken to repel the spell:

> "Mr. Sp. told me that his horse which was bewitched, would break strong halters, like a Sampson. They filled a bottle of the horses urine, stopped it with a cork, and bound it fast in, and then buried it under ground : and the party suspected to be the witch fell ill, that he could not make water, of which he died. When they took up the bottle, the urine was almost gone; so that they did believe that if the fellow could have lived a little longer, he had recovered"

(Merrifield 1955: 197-8).

The American Christian pastor Increase Mather in 1684 condemned the practice of 'putting Urin into a Bottle' and other forms of white magic as ungodly and unlawful. While, Joseph Blagrave in his 'Astrological Practice of Physick' in 1671, described the action of containing nails and urine within a bottle in order to reflect a malevolent curse back to the witch. This paragraph offered a contemporary account of the preparation required to create a witch-bottle:

> "Another way is to stop the urine of the Patient, close up in a bottle, and put into it three nails, pins, or needles, with a little white Salt, keeping the urine always warm : if you let it remain long in the bottle it will endanger the witches life: for I have found by experience that they will be grievously tormented making their water with great difficulty, if any at all, and the more if the Moon be in Scorpio in Square or Opposition to his Significator when its done".

Blagrave gave an insightful explanation into the reason why a witch could be harmed by their intended victim.

> "The reason . . . is because there is part of the vital spirit of the Witch in it, for such is the subtlety of the Devil, that he will not suffer the Witch to infuse any poysonous matter into the body of man or beast, without some of the Witches blood mingled with it ..."

(Merrifield 1955: 198-9, 1987: 169-72; Hoggard 2004: 171; Manning 2011, 2012). The implication is that a link of sympathy was formed from the urine, which became a bridge between the witch and the victim andemployed by both parties in the spell.

Joseph Glanvill, in his 1681 works 'SadducismusTriumphatus' retold a story by the rector William Brearley (before 1644) who heard from a landlord in Suffolk of a witch-bottle episode. The landlord's wife believed she was bewitched and consulted a wise or cunning man who advised her to follow his instructions:

> "He therefore advised him to take a Bottle, and put his Wife's Urine into it, together with Pins and Needles and Nails, and Cork them up, and set the Bottle to the Fire, but be sure the Cork be fast in it, that it fly not out",

When this method did not dispel the enchantment, the old man returned and prescribed a different approach:

> "Take your Wife's Urine as before, and cork it in a Bottle with Nails, Pins and Needles, and bury it in the Earth; and that will do the feat".

The landlord and his wife followed the instructions which produced positive results (Merrifield 1955: 198-9, 1987: 169-72; Hoggard 2004: 171; Manning 2011, 2012).

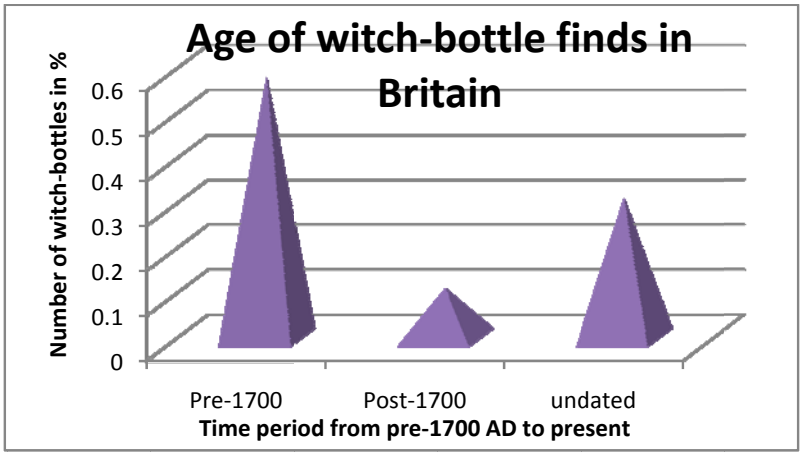


Table 3. The Hoggard (2004: 170) survey (Table: author).

A temporal analysis of witch-bottles revealed that they were introduced around the mid-17th Century and were very popular and the custom continued into the early 20th Century. There was an apparent decline after the 17thCentury but it may be that the tradition survived covertly (Merrifield 1954:11, 1987:170; Maloney 1980:157; Daubney 2003; Roud 2003:524; Hoggard 2004:179, cited in Manning 2012: 98).

The Reigate witch-bottle

In 1992, archaeologists excavated the remains of a mid-17thCentury building in Reigate, Surrey. An excavation revealed the presence of a glass wine bottle (dated around 1685) containing urine and bent pins and identified as a witch-bottle (Massey and Edmonds 2000: 34;Williams 2005: 125; Hoggard 2013). The witch-bottle was discovered adjacent to an outer wall (Williams 2005: 130-1).

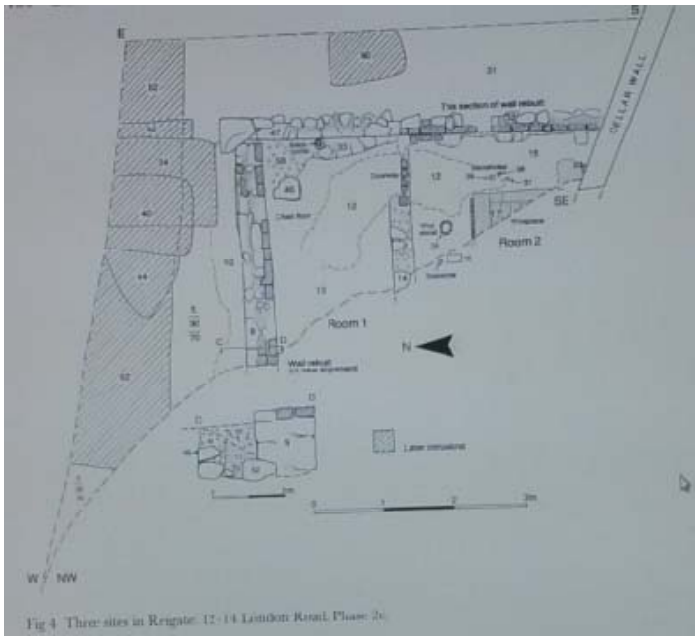


Fig 21. The wine bottle adjacent to the outer wall and below the surface (Fig 4. Williams 2005: 130).

An analysis of the bottle-find showed a whole glass bottle located in an inverted position, corked and containing fluid. It showed evidence of wear and damage on the rim which may have been evidence of prior use(Massey and Edmonds 2000: 34; Williams 2005: 140-2).

On opening the cork, nine bent pins were discovered inside the bottle. The tradition of urine and nails enclosed to reverse a harmful spell originated in Suffolk in the 17th Century and spread to the New World (Williams 2005: 142). Scientific analysis of the liquid revealed traces of magnesium, calcium, sulphate, potassium, sodium, nitrate and phosphate ions, an indication of urine. However, the presence of nitrate was explained from historical accounts which described the mixing of urine and gunpowder to create saltpetre (potassium nitrate) during the English civil war (Massey and Edmonds 2000: 34; Cressey 2013).

Witch-bottles were primarily anti-witchcraft tools used as white magic spell-charms in physical form. The enclosed concoction of urine and nails would supposedly prompt great distress to the witch when she or he passed water (Merrifield 1987: 159-93; Massey and Edmonds 2000:34).

Fig 22. The Reigate witch-bottle (Massey and Edmonds 2000:34).

The construction of anthropomorphic bellarmines ceased at the end of the 17th Century and different forms of bottles were adopted including glass bottles (Massey and Edmonds 2000: 36; Williams 2005: 143). This example displayed the rudimentary ingredients of a standard witch-bottle, urine and sharp metal objects (nine bent pins) and conformed to ethnographic accounts. However, there were some interesting aspects. The urine appeared to be combined with saltpetre, an explosive material perhaps to enhance its magical potency against a witch. The bottle was not buried near a threshold, meaning it was not meant to block the entry of a witchbut may have been infused with the building to enhance its spiritual resilience. The presence of urine and nine pins, inferring it was used against a witch to combat a spell. The appearance of the saltpetre implied an improvement of the spell's efficacy. The inverting of the bottle and the pins suggested aspects not revealed in the literary accounts. Could inversion supply some added feature to the counter-charm? However, it is evident that small variations were present from the initial concept.

The Hellington witch-bottle

In 1976, building renovations were conducted at an 18th Century cottage at Hellington in Norfolk. Preliminary work uncovered a stoneware jar buried beneath the hearth and dated to the late 17th Century. The jug was identified as a bellarmine stoneware jar of the Holmes (1951) type VIII and dated between 1680 and 1700 and adorned with the arms of Amsterdam (Walker 1987: 113; N.H.E.S. 2016).

Fig 23. A typical 17th Century Dutch salt-glazed stoneware bellarmine jug, similar to one discovered at Hellington (PopScreen Inc 2016).

The bellarmine jug was believed to be a witch-bottle and the contents consisted of 8 hawthorn thorns, pieces of a cork, a 115 mm string tied with three knots and 24 sections of a Christian prayer book written in French. One last item was a fragment of the same prayer book but tied in a roll with a human hair and pierced with a bronze pin dated to the 17th Century (Merrifield 1987; Walker 1987: 113).

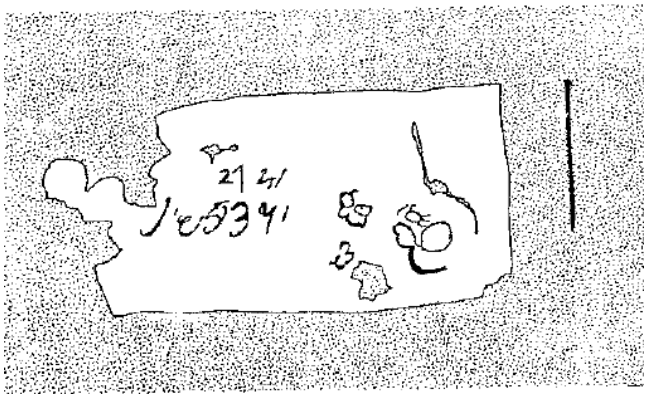


Fig 24. This page section found inside the Hellington bottle highlighted cabalistic writing. The writing may be based on magical numbers and signs of the Zodiac (Fig 1. Walker 1987: 114).

The incorporation of diverse mystical and religious practices made this find unusual. The knotted string indicated an old folk tradition called string magic (Mastin 2009). A knotted string with three knots wasalso called a rain-rope or wind-spell, sold by sea witches to sailors (Campbell 1902: 19; Maple 1962:166; Suckling 2006:82-3). The association with the hearth suggested it was guarding a major threshold of the building or that the heat could in some way affect the effectiveness of the spell(s). The use of a string-charm with nine knots was common in Afro-American spiritual practices to cure headaches (Saxon et al 1945: 529) and the tradition may have been transmitted to the New World by colonists.

This example correlated with features from literary accounts but alsoincluded innovative additions. The container was a bellarmine buried beneath a hearth. Remnants of the original pattern were present, the hair and the pin but combined within a unique spell of Christian and cabalistic beliefs. Iron nails were replaced with

thorns, which were part of the crown worn by Jesus Christ on the cross implying some major religious significance. The combination of pagan and Christiancharms implied the bottle-charm custom was flexible enough to include differentreligious beliefs.

The York witch-bottle

In 1983, archaeologists excavated the 18th Century residence named the 'Judge's Lodgings' in York. They revealed a dark soil layer containing a mid-16th Century stoneware jar with its cork still attached, which was interpreted as a witch-bottle (McComish 2016: 14, Whittaker 2015: 3).

Fig 25. The 'Judge's Lodgings' building in York
(Fig 5. Whittaker 2015: 5).

The survey showed abundant garden soil and a few clay pipes beneath the Judge's Lodgings area indicating the site of St. Wilfred's graveyard (Wilson, Mee 1998: 155, cited in Whittaker 2015: 4). The York bottle contained copper-alloy pins, cloth and traces of urine.Manybottles were discovered within wall cavities and hearths or floors during building work (Manning 2011)but this appeared to be situated within a graveyard (Whittaker 2015: 5).

Fig 26. The 16th Century stoneware jar discovered in York containing copper-alloy pins and possibly urine (Figs 1 and 2. Whittaker 2015: 3).

It was believed witches could not violate holy ground and a 1931 article in the Yorkshire Post stated that holy ground was the most likely place to break a witch-bottle spell (Northerner 1931: 6). In a 19th Century Yorkshire account, a cunning man advised a client to bury their witch-bottle close to a stream as witches could not cross water (Atkinson 1891: 106, cited in Whittaker 2015: 6).

Witch-bottles were also indicators of social customs; bewitched individuals employed the use of a witch-bottle or consulted a wise man or woman. In one instance in 1654, a 'cunning woman' directed a client to heat a lock of their hair with urine to dispel a witchcraft induced headache (Wilby 2009: 36, cited in Whittaker 2015: 6-7). This example showed that bottle-spells were employed for healing ailments.

In previously mentioned historical accounts, specialists were responsible for introducing and directing witch-bottle practices. These mysterious sorcerers were known as cunning folk in the medieval period (Maple 1962: 28, 98; Wilby 2009: 27, cited in Whittaker 2015: 7). This unique social group were vital for exercising activities such as curing people and animals, lifting spells and divination (Whittaker 2015: 7). Afro-American conjurers derived their name from English conjurers who applied similar directives. The York example depicted the initial components with urine and pins present but it was buried within a graveyard, possibly to avoid its capture by a witch.

The three cases displayed aspects of the initial tradition but with unique differences and may infer that the bottle container became a vehicle for projecting an enchantment. The original premise of the custom was modified to accommodate diverse intentions influenced by circumstances and cultural changes.

Chapter 4 - The American witch-bottle

Witchcraft in America was just as real and feared by colonists as it was in England during the 17th and 18th Centuries. The Salem witch-trials in Massachusetts were probably the most well-known events recorded in historical accounts (Alexandrowicz 1986: 119; Linder 2009). In the colony and later state of Pennsylvania, witchcraft became so prevalent that 'The English Act Against Conjuration….of 1603' was introduced (Becker 1978: 1, cited in Alexandrowicz 1986: 119).

American witch-bottles shared many attributes with their English counter-parts except that they were constructed from glass. Geographically, witch-bottles had been mainly located within the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions (Becker 1978, 1980, 2005; Painter 1980; Alexandrowicz 1986; King 1996; Morehouse 2009; Barber 2006, cited in Manning 2011, 2012: 108).

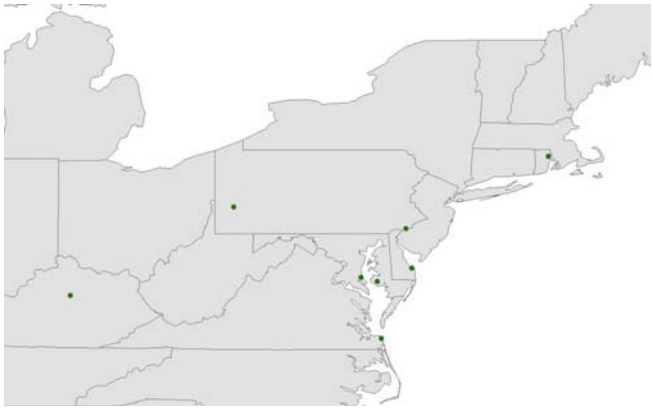


Fig 27. A map highlighting witch-bottle finds in North America (Fig 3.8. Manning 2012: 109).

Only eight witch-bottles had been uncovered in North America (Manning 2012: 111). These glass bottles were either wine or medicine varieties and predominantly contained nails and pins (possibly urine but analysis was inconclusive in many cases). However, they were similar to English typeswith some solitary cases, enclosing unique contentvariations. The Essington, Dorchester and Market Street examples werepresented as different models for analysis and comparison with their English counter-parts.

Location	Date	Container	Contents	Context	Type
Patuxent Point, Calvert Co., MD[a]	1658-1680	4 glass case bottles (broken)	3 iron nails, pig's pelvic bone, jaw bone of small mammal	pit near domestic structure, "inverted or near-inverted"	B-2?
Great Neck Bottle, Virginia Beach, VA[b]	1690-1750	glass medicine vial, light green	25 pins, 3 iron nails, amber-colored film	near structure (rear door?), inverted	B-3
Lewes Bottle, Lewes, DE	1700-1750	glass bottle	pins	pit near doorway of farmhouse	B-2
Essington Bottle, Tinicum Island, PA[c]	1740-1750	glass wine bottle, dark olive green, squat	6 straight pins, wood stopper	hole near base of chimney, inverted	B-2
Horn Point Bottle, Dorchester Co., MD[d]	1750-1760	glass wine bottle, olive green (neck only)	17 pins, straight and bent, stuck in cork (outside and inside)	hearth or chimney of structure	D
Cove Lands Charm, Providence, RI	1780-1820	glass medicine vial, clear	6 straight pins		B-3
Armstrong Farmstead, Fayette Co., KY[e]	1810-1850	glass medicine vial	4 straight pins, sealed with a cork	associated with small structure	B-3
Market Street Bottle, Pittsburgh, PA[f]	post 1824	glass bottle	2 shoe insole patterns, piece of heart-shaped felt pierced with 9 pins and 3 needles, "a murky fluid," sealed with a cork	bottom of brick-lined cistern	C

*Data from Becker 2005, unless otherwise noted.
[a] King 1996
[b] Painter 1980
[c] Becker 1978
[d] Morehouse 2009
[e] Barber 2006
[f] Alexandrowicz 1986

Table 4. A table showing eight known witch-bottle examples discovered in North America (Fig 3.2. Manning 2012: 112).

Bottles dated from the mid-17th Century to the early 19th Century were near or underneath thresholds, however, apart from all being infused with nails or pins within their magical concoctions, their material elements varied considerably.

Ethnohistorical references began with the earliest in 1681, wherein a 'doctor' advised a client to

> "to take the water of said Michaell and close it in A Bottell";

it was then placed within a cupboard (Godbeer 1992: 46). A Quaker family in 1682 weretold to heat a pot with urine and nails to cure a poltergeist attack:

> "did set on the Fire a Pot with Urine, and crooked Pins in it, with [the] design to have it boil, and by that means to give Punishment to the Witch, or Wizard … and take off their own, as they had been advised"

(St. George 1998:193-195, cited in Manning 2012: 118). In 1877, the Proctor family in Georgia concealed a black bottle filled with pins beneath their front entrance to repel witches (Moore 1892: 230). Another account in Alabama in the 1950s (Browne 1958[9]: 195) described one ritual action.

> "Put your urine in a bottle and put pins in it and put it up the chimney. This will reverse a hex. You must know the person who is hexing you."

Ethnographic accounts presented the fundamental format of the tradition inciting use of urine and nails placed within threshold locations or to heat over a fire.

<u>The Essington witch-bottle</u>

At Tinnicum Island, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, excavations in 1976 at a mid-17th Century building unearthed a rounded dark green wine bottle dated to around 1740-50. The bottle contained six brass pins and was tightly sealed with a wood stopper (Becker 1978, cited in Manning 2011). The building was habited by a Quaker family for most of the 18th Century when it was believed to have been concealed. It was discovered buried upside-down at the bottom of a chimney with a bird bone and a segment of black-glazed redware. Becker (1978, 2005) implied the bottle may have contained urine and a piece of cloth but the remains were inconclusive (Alexandrowicz 1986: 120;Manning 2011).

Fig 28. The Essington witch-bottle (Becker 1978, 2005, cited in Manning 2011).

A number of English versions had been unearthed upside-down containing pins and urine, in London, Ipswich and Norwich (Merrifield 1987: 168-9). English stoneware types evolved into glass types in the mid-17th and early 18th Centuries (the Reigate example was a glass bottle and concealed in an inverted position, containing urine and copper pins) and some were discovered concealed within chimneys (ibid: 174, 180). The Essington bottle was concealed beneath a chimney containing six brass pins and possibly urine meaning it was used for the original function of reversing a strangury or defending a threshold. The bone and pottery fragments may refer to a secondary function as foundation deposits or that they formed a unified group-spell. More analysis is required on the ceramic segment and the bone to ascertain whether they had some mystical value.

Although, Sweden was the first nation to implant a permanent settlement in Delaware in 1643, Pennsylvania would eventually be founded by the English and the Quakers in 1647, who would become the dominant group. Around 1730, almost 10,000 Afro-American slaves lived in the region and were owned by English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh colonists (Anon 2016c). The interaction of slaves and diverse European groups could have been instrumental in the cross-fertilisation of magical practices.

The Market Street witch-bottle

In 1981, archaeologists (Alexandrowicz, J.S. 1981; 1985; n.d.; Alexandrowicz, S.R. 1981; Alexandrowicz and Alexandrowicz 1983; 1984) began excavations at an urban site in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Alexandrowicz 1986: 120). Pittsburgh comprised of numerous ethnic groups including Irish, Scottish, English, German and Polish groups. The bottle find was discovered in a brick-lined cistern (feature 1) in the south west corner of area 1 (ibid 121).

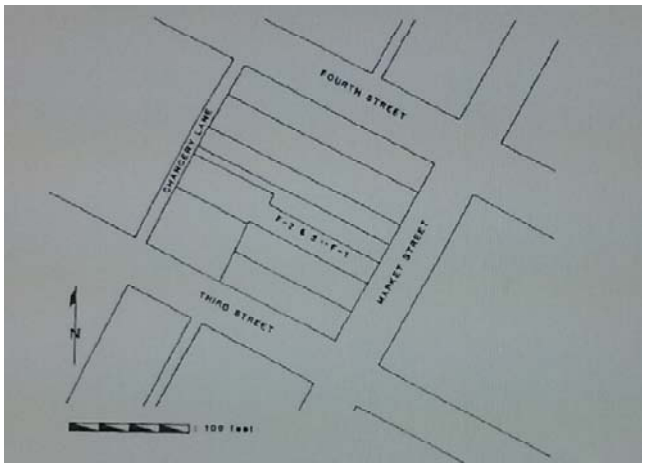


Fig 29. Feature 1 represented the brick-lined cistern, where the witch-bottle was deposited (Fig 2. ibid: 121).

The bottle-find was located at the bottom of the lowest layer of the cistern deposits and a segment of historical flask dated around 1824 indicating a possible deposition date(ibid 122).

The Market Street witch-bottle was an indigenous free-blown aquamarine glass bottle and contained a discoloured liquid (possibly urine) and two shoe insoles enclosed with a heart-shaped felt pierced with three needles and nine brass pins (Alexandrowicz 1986: 124-5; Becker 2005:19-20, cited in Manning 2011). A bellarmine witch-bottle was discovered with pierced cloths and pins in Pennington, England and dated to the second half of the 17th Century (Merrifield 1987: 164-5).

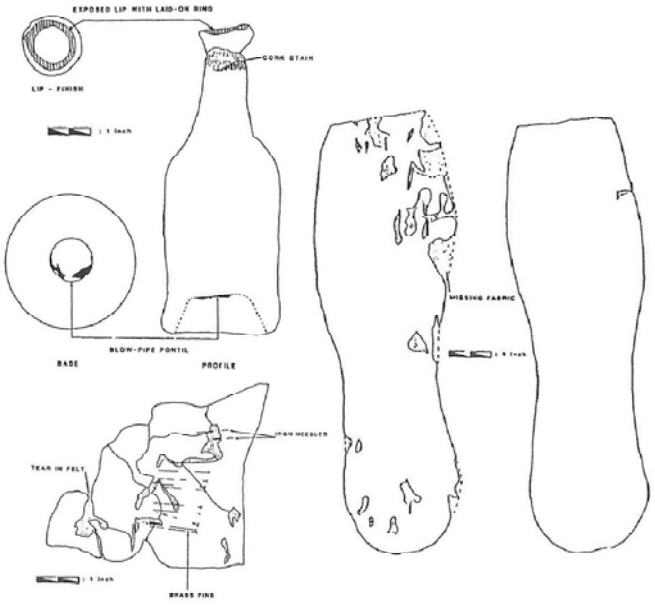


Fig 30. The Market Street witch-bottle (Alexandrowicz 1986: 124-5; Manning 2011)

Shoes were apotropaic charms concealed in threshold sections of buildings including roofs, chimneys and floorboards (Merrifield 1987: 131; Hoggard 2004: 179). This is the first example anywhere of a bottle containing a shoe-charm and suggests that the two traditions were merged together.

Fig 31. This shoe-charm was discovered hidden in a chimney breast in Surrey, England c.1670-80 (Merrifield 1987: 132).

Additionally, the cloth with the pierced pins may have simulated another English magical tradition. In 17th Century Cornwall, animal hearts pierced with pins were hidden within chimneys to defend against witchcraft (Merrifield 1955: 196).

Fig 32. A bellarmine witch-bottle from England containing fragments of hair, nails and a cloth pierced with pins, d. 1650-1700 (Merrifield 1987: 165).

The Market Street bottle indicated the gradual sophistication of witch-bottle usage through the use of multiple charms deployed within the bottle-charm medium. Although, numerous European groups including the English inhabited Pittsburgh, a 1790 census showed there were around 880 slaves in the area. Many blacks migrated to the region in the early 1800s and settled in places like Arthursville. Demographic evidence showed that Euro-Americans lived in close proximitywith Afro-Americans and by the period of the witch-bottle find (c. 1824), were fully integrated socially (P.P. 2016).

The Dorchester witch-bottle

In 1983, archaeological excavations began prior to building developments at the University of Maryland. One of the features excavated was the remains of a house or slave quarter dated between the mid-19th Century and early 20th Century (Schiek and Godley 1984: 11-17, cited in Morehouse 2009). Excavators working at a chimney or hearth at the side of a brick structure inside the feature discovered the neck segment of a green glass wine bottle, which appeared to date from the mid-18th Century (Schiek and Godley 1984: 11-4, Morehouse 2009; Manning 2011). The cork stopper revealed 17 nickel-plated copper pins (both straight and bent) impaled on its exterior and interior surfaces. This was an indication to the archaeologists that they had discovered a witch-bottle (Morehouse 2009; Manning 2011).

Fig 33. The Dorchester witch-bottle (Morehouse 2009).

In many cases, bottles were discovered inverted and it has been surmised that this inversion signified the reversal of the witch-spell by the victim (Becker 1980: 20-21).

Fig 34. A glass witch-bottle found in Cornwall, England and exhibiting the same technique of pins attached to the exterior of the cork and containing urine (Merrifield 1987: 181)

This English example (fig 34) was very similar to the Dorchester bottle. It contained urine, had pins placed on the outside surface and was concealed beneath a chimney and was made of glass.

The Dorchester witch-bottle layer contained a melted green bottle section, a bone and a horseshoe (Schiek and Thomas 1983: 11-3, cited in Morehouse 2009).Horseshoes and boneshave been discovered with other witch-bottle burials in England and America (Becker 2005: 18, cited in Morehouse 2009) and used as protective charms in multiple folklore traditions.

The intriguing factor in this case study was that the building excavated may have belonged to slaves indicating that Afro-Americans may have practiced a Euro-American form of bottle-charm or at the least been aware of the practice. During the slavery era, Dorchester County was known for the ruthless slave trader Patty Canon but also as the home of Harriet Tubman, who helped over 300 slaves escape during

the civil war (D.C.G. 2015). This turbulent period could have produced dynamic ethnic exchanges such as bottle-charm traditions.

The three case studies contain similarities but also interesting differences. All three contained brass pins, albeit in different configurations. The Essington bottle was placed with possible foundation deposits. The Market St. bottle contained two insoles, also considered charms. The Dorchester bottle had pins inserted on both sides of its cork, similar to one English example. All three bottles contained possible elements of secondary charms and were concealed near thresholdsand may have enclosed urine. The association of Anglo-American witch-bottles in proximity to slave populations opened the door to the possibility of folk-magic adoptions and collaborations.

Chapter 5 - The Afro-American Conjure-bottle

The resemblance between conjure-bottles and witch-bottles had beennoticed by academics. They both containedcertain similar magically-imbued materials and concealed either within walls, underneath thresholds or in open spaces. One difference was that conjure-bottles could be buried under pathways and the victim

could be ‘tricked’ as they passed over (Wilkie 1997: 88-9; Fennell 2000: 297; Anderson 2005: 61, cited in Manning 2012: 131-2). Tricked, implied the casting of a spell to cause injury or misfortune.

Conjure-bottles enclosed human body-parts such as hair, nails etc. akin to witch-bottles (Wilkie 1997: 88) and powdery substances similar to West African magical concoctions. In Annapolis, a perfume bottle holding soil and a seed was unearthed beneath a building floor (Cochran 1999: 28). The presence of powders or West African related items possibly inferred the concept of minkisi or the use of African charms (Samford 1996 107-109; Wilkie 1997: 88-89). This suggested the combination of European and African charm traditions.

An analysis of conjure-bottle references in American folklore revealed three types of conjure-bottles (Puckett 1968; Hyatt 1935, 1970-1978). The first type were identical to witch-bottles in contents and spatial locations, the second form shared features from Euro-American and Afro-American folk traditions and the third variation, contained solely West African spiritual elements (Manning 2012: 133).

One account from a black conjurer for alleviating sorcery with a bottle (Puckett 1968: 299) stated:

> “get nine needles, nine brass pins, and nine hairs from your own head. Cork these up in a bottle with some of your urine and set the bottle in the back of your fireplace. ‘Den earnes’lyax de Lawdter help yerobbercomedat trick what’s sot agin’ you.’ When the bottle bursts, all your ailments will leave you.”

This version paralleled the original English variant;however, the bottle-charm included Christian connotationssimilar to the Hellington witch-bottle.In an 1898 account from the ‘Southern Workman’, a conjure-doctor cured a patient by pouring chicken blood on his hand to lead him to a buried bottle enclosing bent pins and a dead snake (Anderson 2005: 102). Once the contents were destroyed the patient was ‘cured’. The conjurer also reversed the spell onto its creator in a similar fashion to English bottle-spells. This conjure-bottle combined elements of African and Euro-American witch-bottles. Another conjure-bottle with amalgamated practices was described in an 1899 edition of Southern Workman (1899: 112).

> “Have a vial, put into it nails, red flannel, and whiskey. Put a cork in it, then stick nine pins in the cork. Bury this where the one you want to trick walks.”

The use of whiskey and red flannel is derived from Afro-American traditions but the nails and burial are decidedly Euro-American. However, the use of the bottle-spell as a trap waiting to ensnare a victim is primarily Afro-American in origin but the piercing of pins onto the cork is consistent with Euro-American examples (Merrifield 1987:180-181; Hoggard 2004:174; Morehouse 2009).

A conjure-bottle with solitary Afro-American influences was described by Puckett (1968: 231), wherein a bottle containing stones, roots and red dust (brick dust was a popular hoodoo ingredient, Leone et al 2001) was unearthed beneath a threshold. Other bottle-charms enclosing iron nails, beans and red powder were also discovered in the outer courtyard. Apart from iron nails all the materials initiated from African-American beliefs (Manning 2012: 134-5) cited one difference,that was witch-bottles were intentionally hidden so the witch could not undo the spell (Maloney 1980). Whereas, the conjure-bottle in some cases was consciously placed so that it would be found to state a personal complaint (Wilkie 1997: 88-9).

Another custom with amalgamated traits could be the 'bottle tree' tradition present in the American Deep South. Thompson (1983:142-143) stated such trees with bottles attached to their branches warded off black magic and derived from the Bakongo culture. An 18th Century French account described similar practices:

> "All, after having cultivated their field, take care, in order to drive away sterility and the evil spells, to fix in the earth, in a certain manner, certain branches of certain trees, with some pieces of broken pots. They do more or less the same thing before their houses, when they must absent themselves during a considerable time. The most determined thief would not dare to cross their threshold, when he sees it thus protected by these mysterious signs"

(ibid142). In the West Indies in the 18th Century, bottle trees filled with graveyard dust adorned slave quarters (ibid 142) and in the 20th Century, Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina were locationswhich contained bottle tree customs (Manning 2012: 136).

Fig 35. A number of bottle trees in Mississippi in the 1930s (Fig 3.20 Manning 2012: 136).

Bottle trees and bottle-charmsoperatedwithin a landscape of syncretic folk practices to produce possible variations of the witch-bottle tradition (Manning 2012: 136-7).

The following case studies examined fourritual glass bottles discovered at Prestwould, Jamaica and two at the Montpellier Mansion, Virginia. Different labels had been ascribed to these objects such as: hoodoo, Obeah, witch or conjure bottles (King 2006: 294; Merrifield 1987, cited in Reeves 2014: 177). An investigation of their contexts, functions and ingredients may highlight influences with their Euro-American counter-parts.

The Prestwould conjure-bottle

Prestwould was a late 18th Century plantation situated in Mecklenberg County, Virginia, comprising of numerous late 18th and early 19th Century exterior buildings and a central mansion (Samford 1991: 1). It functioned as an agricultural industry worked by slaves, producing corn and tobacco who also bred sheep, cattle and pigs (ibid 1-2).

Fig 36. The Prestwould slave quarter under renovation (Fig 3. ibid 5).

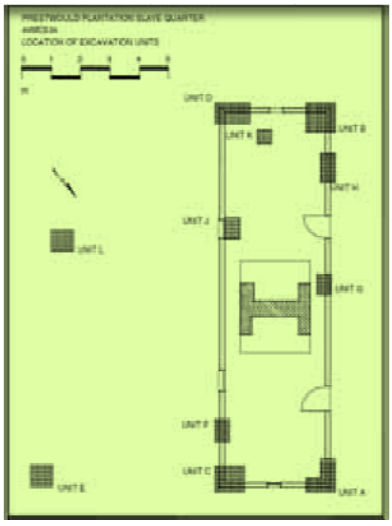


Fig 37. This diagram showed the layout of the test units excavated (Fig 4. ibid 6).

Onefind of interest which was discovered concealed between the inner and outer walls was a medicine bottle labelled 'Phenolax Wafers' and dated to the late 19th or early 20th Century (ibid 17). The bottle contained one button and may have incorporated Afro-American spiritual customs (Samford 1996: 110).

Fig 38. This medicine bottle containing one button was discovered apparently hidden with the fabric of the wall spaces and believed to be a conjure-bottle (Fig 12. Samford 1991: 18).

This ‘conjure-bottle’ was concealed similarly to a witch-bottle within the essence of the building but contained a single button. This made this find unique due to its sole item,there was no indication of inscriptions on the surface but buttons were used as charms by slaves (Russell 1997: 67; Wall 2000: 3). Therefore the inclusion of the bottle medium and the button possibly suggested the unification of two charm customs. In Tennessee, the Hermitage plantation revealed four medicine bottles found underneath the floors of slave habitats, which could have represented nkisi power (Samford 1996: 109). Medicine bottles-charms had been discovered within African-inspired conjurer kits at slave sites (Orser 1994: 42) and nkisi segments could function as separate power objects.This particular deposition may have reflected a personal apotropaic charm fused within the building fabric andempowered withnkisi and witch-bottle enchantments.

The Jamaican Obeah conjure-bottle

In the early 19th Century, St. Catherine’s Parish in Jamaica was home to a small community of enslaved labourers, whose descendantspurchased the land. This continuation of family ties in the area allowed the formation of strong oral histories (Reeves 2014: 181).

Archaeological fieldwork at the ‘slave centre’ site highlighted one building mound (probably a wattle and daub house with a clay and rubble floor) and exposed two standing bottles underneath the porch area (ibid 182-3). Dating of the bottle layer was between the 1820s and 1830s. The bottles were locatedbeneath the front doorway and believed to be bottle-charms(Reeves 1996, cited in Wilkie 2000: 11; Reeves 2014: 183). The bottles had been damaged andrevealed the remains of lime and charcoal at their bases. The use of glass bottles for black spiritual practices was observed across the Caribbean and southern North America (Thompson 1983; Franklin 1995; Wilkie 1997, cited in Wilkie 2000: 11; Reeves 2014: 183-4).

Fig 39. The two Obeah bottles discovered in context at the Juan de Bolas site, and insets of the partially restored forms (Fig 10.2. Reeves 2014: 183).

Linton Rhule aided the archaeologists as his family had occupied the occupied area since its inception, over 160 years ago. Spiritual beliefs centred on the pacification of deceased spirits called 'duppies' (ibid184). Drawing on his knowledge of his cultural past, Rhule identified the bottles as Obeah duppy bottles. These spiritual items were still employed by the current population (ibid 185).

Rhulelearned from his uncle(Linton Rhule) that bottles concealed in corners of buildings, yards and thresholds were used for apotropaic purposes or for casting hexes on passing victims. Specific ingredients were used for specific functions. Nail parings bounded an individual spirit to a fixed location,likea cotton tree. Bush medicine related to apotropaic meanings and human hair placed in a bottle was for malevolent intentions. Linton Rhule reflected on ethnohistorical customs from the 1950s, when as a law enforcer in the community, he came across buried bottles. These were hidden to hinder his efforts to expose illegal dealings by malcontents. Conjure bags containing nine rocks buried in the ground made the "law" reverse their steps and disappear according to a New Orleans account (Hyatt 1970: 650-1; Reeves 2014: 186). Interestingly, the African-inspired aspects related to positive magic but the possible European-derived features of bottles and nails referred to harmful magic according in the oral accounts. JamaicanObeah bottles were mentioned in 19th Century literary sources for usage in placating deceased spirits, attacking enemies, deflecting evil spirits and repelling robbers. (Phillippo 1843: 247; Kingsley 1887; Bell 1889: 10, cited in Reeves 2014: 186). In Louisiana, a bottle-charm filled with red pepper, beef gall, gumbo filé and bad vinegar could destroy a victim in voodoo practices. The bottle had to be buried inverted with the name of the victim inside (Saxon et al 1945: 538). Cross-fertilisation of practices was common between Caribbean and mainland conjurers and conjure was identified as Obeah (its West African name) in the Caribbean (Hurston 1931: 320).

The principles of Obeah were well known in the Caribbean and the term may have originated from the Igbo term 'dibia' meaning healer (Bilby and Handler 2004: 11 cited in Reeves 2014: 186) or from the Akan-Twi word 'o-bayifo', relating to witchor sorcerer. There was sufficient evidence to connect Obeah to West African mystical traditions (Reeves 2014: 186; Alexander 2016). The placement beneath a

threshold and oral accounts of hair and nails included in spells suggested entwined Afro-European traditions employed within the practice.

The Montpellier Mansion conjure bottle

The Montpellier Mansion in Virginia was built in the 1760s and the slave contingent of the household lived primarily in the cellars, where they socialised and kept their belongings(Reeves 2014: 197-8; Montpelier Foundation 2016).

Although no stockpile of items was found as in other similar excavations (Samford 1996; Brown 2001; Leone et al 2014), a number of damaged bottles were unearthed.These items were discovered beneath the wall partition and storage pit and appeared to follow patterns of deliberate bottle-charm concealment(Reeves 2014: 189).

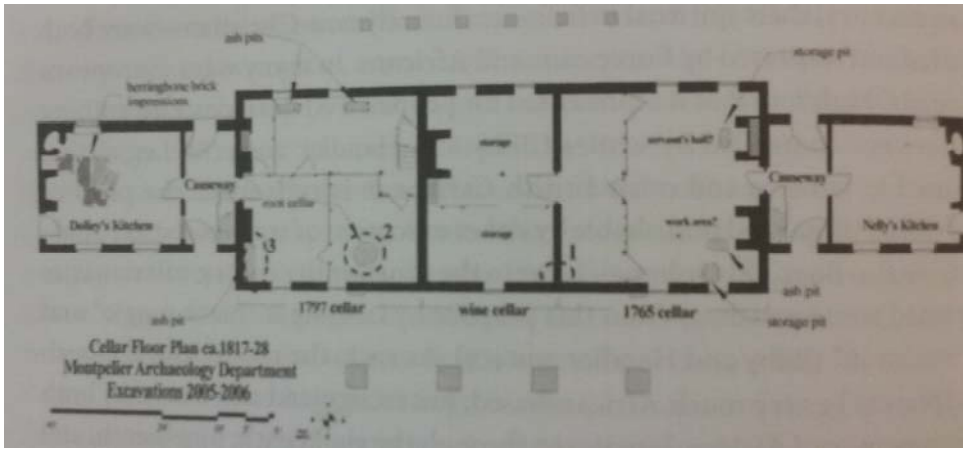


Fig 40. The Montpellier cellar highlighting the relevant features. 1: bottle beneath the wall barrier and 3: subfloor pit with medicine bottle (Fig 10.3. Reeves 2014: 188).

The wine bottle located between the walls partitions contained the remains of egg shell and bone segments (Reeves 2014: 190). The evidence of deliberate structural brick-remodelling around the wall space to install the bottle suggested that the object was consciously concealed(ibid 190-1). The ingredients were unusual and bones were known deposits in nkisi and conjuring practices. The location also implied a correlation with witch-bottle placements. Therefore, this possible conjure-bottle possibly contained elements of Afro-American medicine powders butpositionedsimilar toEuro-American practices.

The third bottle discovery was that of an aqua coloured medicine bottle base found in a pit (containing ash and glass shards) underneath the northern corner of a parallel cellar room next to the lower section of a chimney. Analysis of surrounding deposits suggested dates from the 19th Century (ibid 192). In some instances, conjure-bottles were buried in room corners containing rum, river water and sugar. They would be

inverted and applied to ‘fix’ a landlord who was cruel by inserting his name inside (Hurston 1931: 366).

Fig 41. The Montpellier Mansion medicine bottle may have been used as a conjure-bottle (Fig 3.19. Manning 2012: 132).

The unusual aspect of this discovery was that it was standing upright, in the corner of the depression and filled with a charred substance, which was believed to be burnt wood. Additionally, the placement in the corner coincided with witch-bottle designations (Samford 1996; Leone 2005, cited in Reeves 2014: 192-3). Charred remains had been found in conjure-bottles and nkisi containers, which implied anassociation. This example may have incorporated features from both Afro-American and Euro-American bottle-charm traditions. The burnt wood contents may signify some magical meaning or medicinal property (Covey 2008; Reeves 2014: 194). It has been surmised that conjure-bottles replaced conjure bags (Anderson 2005: 61) but one account related conjure bags to American witch-bottles. Richard Carruthers, an ex-slave recounted a custom of filling conjure bags with needles, thimbles, hair and brass pins on plantations. Brass pins and hair were popular ingredients in American witch-bottles (Rawick 1972: part 1: 199), it is possible conjure bags initially adopted witch-bottle traits, which were later incorporated into conjure-bottles.

The four cases displayed unique features and locations such as inner walls, doorways and floor corners(Leone & Fry 1999: 380, cited in Wall 2000: 2) parallel to witch-bottle deposition patterns. However, the contents appeared distinctly to originate from Afro-American spell charms. The button, lime and ash, eggshells, bone and charred wood were all components of various Afro-American powdered medicines. It is widely accepted that slaves interacted with Native Americans and Europeans to produce new syncretic faiths and practices through a process of refining certain beliefs and creating new traditions (Orser 1994: 34). In some cases, bottle-charm contents (such as peppers, garlic, rum and quicksilver) were mixed and ingested to ward off evil (Thurston 1931: 324). The discovery and analysis of these artefacts may represent the material evidence for this practice.

Conclusion

Afro-American material folk charms were forged from dynamic ethnic interactions between mainly African, European and Native American groups. This fluidic landscape became the breeding ground for the birth of syncretic belief-systems. There was little evidence of original African traditionsafter the first generation of slaves but abundant indications of widespread creolization of philosophiesformed from migration, diffusion and socio-cultural interchanges. The majority of material charms presented in this paper demonstrated multi-faceted spiritual influences and this included conjure-bottles.

The study of nkisi in African and Afro-American practices highlighted similarities and differences. Shells, beads, herbs and powders were employed as 'medicines' with personal adornments in shrines, pots, charm bags and bundles. The Ghanaian ritual pot contained cowrie shells,a copper bell, coins and pebbles with combined charm medicines and personal items to be blessed by spiritual beings. The Frogmore Manor Plantation conjure-bottle contained shell and bone pieces, copper bead and magnetic sand placed above a sacrificed animal and probably adhered to similar roles. The one difference was that Afro-American practices were performed in secret (Brown 2001), probably to avoid detection from slave-rulers. The conjure-bottle was involved within nkisi traditions but withadditional meanings. Kongo and Tallensi worldviews recognised shrines as gateways between worlds enacted through ritual libations. However, the sparsity of typical African shrines in America and the discovery of numerous 'conjure kits' inferred the transformation of black beliefs from organised African religious forms into syncretic adaptions to cope with the new social requirements.

The three English witch-bottle examples and their ethnographic accounts endorsedthe principle profile of these devices as anti-witchcraft charms containing urine and nails (plus various additions) and concealed within specific locations. A study of witch-bottle accounts in the United States confirmed that these activities were transmittedand practiced in a similar manner but in glass form. The English HellingtonandAmerican Market Street examples were deliberately included to show the complex variations employed within bottle-charm applications. African-American social groups were present within the spatial proximity of the three American examples and the interaction of folk practices could have been initiated through cultural interactions.

Conjure-bottles showed similarities towitch-bottle ingredients and spatial positions, for example, the threshold in the Jamaican find and within the walls and floors at Prestwould and Montpellier. However, certain ingredients were more akin to Afro-American magical materials. Ethnographic interpretations described in chapter five highlighted three general types. The first two forms contained distinctive witch-bottle traits but the third type adopted specifically Afro-American ingredients but in diverse roles.Theseconjure-bottle examples conformed to the third type. Conjure-

bottle traditions were introduced in the same temporal, geographic and multi-cultural locations asEuro-American witch-bottles. In one literary account, a buried jar enclosed with nine pins and nails, along with a sheep's heart and alcohol caused heartbreak (Thurston 1931: 368). There was sufficient evidence to argue that blacks and whites in the New World exchanged spiritual knowledge. That is why it was important to describe the ethnically intertwined socio-spiritual landscape of the colonial era. Afro-American bottle-charms contained witch-bottles elements but were adapted to suit the needs of black cultures. Blacks recognised Euro-American bottle-charms as conduits for casting spells. The bottle trees highlighted an amalgamation of West African and Euro-American traditions which may have been a transitional custom before conjure-bottle inception. Conjure-bottles were one of many syncretic charms and amulets created in this spiritual landscape; however, more research is required to understand this phenomenon.

The elements of nkisi and witch-bottle traits were evident within the constitutions of charm-objects such as: bags, bundles or bottles. An ex-slave, Willis Easter outlined a specific method for creating a hand (bag) using roots and various ingredients:

> "For to make a jack am sho' good, git snakeroot and sassafras and a li'l lodestone and brimstone and asafoetida and resin and bluestone and gum arabic and a pod or two red pepper. Put dis in de red flannel bag, at midnight on de dark of de moon, and it sho' do de work"

(Rawick 1972, part 2:34).

An ex-slave Anna Grant stated:

> "Annuder way dey conjures you is to get some of your hair and some roots and a little of your wine [urine] put in all in a bottle and den cork it up real tight and bury it under your doorstep; and believe me you is fixed"

(Rawick 1977: 266).These two accounts presented the application of bag and bottle charm-making using variations of African and European magical concoctions. The retention of nkisi practices was evident within material finds such as the conjurer's kit at Frogmore Manor and within spiritual containers in the Caribbean and North America. Numerous ethnographic examples attested to the association. A bottle filled with holy water, sugar, honey and cinnamon buried under the back door would keep a husband at home. Alternatively, to leave a partner, a bottle enclosed with vinegar, salt, pepper and the name of the individual had to be placed within a room corner (Thurston 1931: 383). Nkisi in both continents generated from one concept: magical ingredients enclosed within containers of cloth, ceramic or other materials but appropriated for different uses (Leone & Fry 1999: 379-80). Conjure-bottles became another representation of this practice and may have replaced conjure bags (Anderson 2005: 61) and used for personal desires. Additionally, the flexibility of witch-bottle applications with the use of ingredients and meanings paralleled nkisi practices, which is possibly why they became intertwined so rapidly.

The aims of this paper have been ambitious and required more in-depth study. Afro-American spiritual and social history was culturally suppressed and detailed written accounts were omitted from the historical record. Interpretations were based on comparable archaeological, oral and colonial evidence which required correlating into recognizable patterns. However, I would argue that the premise of nkisi and witch-bottle traditions embedded within conjure-bottle practices has been successful. Although, African traditions diluted through social integration, fundamental African features of nkisi and medicinal charms were retained but appropriated for different functions, such as hexing, healing and spiritual protection. The concept of spiritual containment remained and evolved through different forms, such as bags, bundles and bottles. The large numbers of ritual house deposits discovered across North America were based on hybridised traditions. These caches contained Afro-European elements to control spirits actualized in northeast corners, sills and hearths (Leone & fry 1999: 377), all spatial positions distinct to witch-bottle practices.

There had been resistance to the idea of witch-bottles and conjure-bottles originating from the same stable but evidence has shown otherwise. Ethnographic accounts described the similar use of hair, nails and urine buried underneath thresholdsin bottle containers in all three cultures. Archaeological evidence displayed conjure-bottles concealed within walls, floors and doorways containing Afro-American charms? The unification of witch-bottle and nkisi concepts within Afro-American bottle-charmshad been recognisable in some instances. Ultimately, conjure-bottles were introduced in the same temporal, geographic and social background of witch-bottle practices and their presence could not be coincidental. This is why it had been important to include the account of ethnic and cultural creolization within the colonial environment. The reader had to understand the social and spiritual interactions in the period of slavery between blacks and whites. African religions could not be re-produced in the Americas, new circumstances, environments, intermarriages and forces of enslavement shaped the creolization of black people (Wilkie 2000: 24). The study of integrated folk practices including the conjure-bottle mirrored the formation of black cultures in the Americas. The manifestation of syncretic amulets and charms became the physical and cultural representation of a creolized Afro-American history.

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